



3 1761 06583461 6



SOME CONTEMPORARY ARTISTS



IN THE SAME SERIES

SOME CONTEMPORARY NOVELISTS (WOMEN).

By R. BRIMLEY JOHNSON.

SOME CONTEMPORARY NOVELISTS (MEN).

By R. BRIMLEY JOHNSON.

SOME CONTEMPORARY POETS.

By HAROLD MONRO.

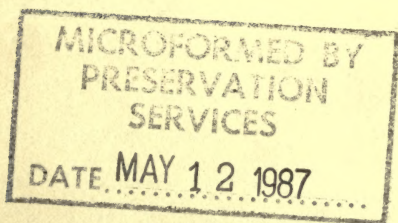
Art. BC
R

SOME CONTEMPORARY ARTISTS

BY

FRANK RUTTER

Art Critic to the *Sunday Times*



175950.

21.11.22

LONDON
LEONARD PARSONS
DEVONSHIRE STREET



First Published 1922

LEONARD PARSONS, LTD.

CONTENTS

	PAGE
I. THE BRITISH SCHOOL	II
II. LUCIEN PISSARRO	25
III. WALTER SICKERT	45
IV. JAMES PRYDE	59
V. C. J. HOLMES	69
VI. WILLIAM ROTHENSTEIN	79
VII. WILLIAM ORPEN	93
VIII. AUGUSTUS JOHN	109
IX. GILMAN AND GORE.	123
X. CHARLES GINNER	141
XI. J. D. FERGUSON	157
XII. HENRY LAMB	169
XIII. WYNDHAM LEWIS	179
XIV. C. W. R. NEVINSON	193
XV. PAUL AND JOHN NASH	207

TO THE MEMORY OF
S. F. G. AND H. G.

THE BRITISH SCHOOL

SOME CONTEMPORARY ARTISTS

I. THE BRITISH SCHOOL.

IT is no longer the fashion to abuse British pictures. All sorts of nice things are being said about our paintings and, if we believed all we were told, we should think that our painters had nothing to learn from anybody.

“ British art stands second to none in the world.” So said Sir Robert Witt at the opening of a Spring exhibition in Whitechapel this year (1922) ; and Sir William Orpen, who himself certainly knows how to paint, has echoed his words. No doubt it is comforting to have a good opinion of ourselves, but these pronouncements would carry more conviction did they come from the mouth of a foreigner. We are hardly able ourselves justly to appraise the worth of our contemporary artists.

What is the test of greatness in an artist ?

12 SOME CONTEMPORARY ARTISTS

Ultimately, we know, the verdict is given by time and time alone, but in his own lifetime we can sometimes hazard a guess at the opinion of posterity by listening to what is being said abroad about one of our artists. It is not enough for an artist to influence his compatriots; he must influence the world before we can regard him as a star of the first magnitude. Here at once we come upon a difficulty. The influence of a great artist often becomes apparent only after his death, so how can we hope properly to classify one during his own lifetime? There is no certainty; but when we find an artist influencing not only his own countrymen but the artists of other countries also, then we have some grounds for believing that, unless his vogue be a mere fashion, his fame will endure.

Hitherto British painting has been more influenced than influencing. Constable and Turner both made their mark on the art of France, but since them what English painter has profoundly agitated the artists of Europe? On the other hand, how many French artists have deeply affected British painting.

When we remember that for the past thirty

years our best painters have been following and sometimes—but rarely—developing French traditions, it seems a little extravagant at first to declare that contemporary British art is “ahead of anything to be found in any other country.” It may be so, but it seems a little early to be positive. The reason why it may be so is just because the present generation of British artists have been continually subject to foreign competition. Therein lies our hope for the present: in their self-satisfaction lies a danger for the future.

An American critic of the drama has traced the decadence of the French stage to the want of any outside standard of comparison. “Each new actor,” he wrote, “is compared, not with Novelli or Forbes-Robertson or Moissi, but invariably with other French actors; each new play stands or falls upon its merit as a *French* work, and not upon its intrinsic merit.”¹ What will be the prospect for British painting once there obtains a firm conviction that there is no foreign contemporary painting worthy to be compared with it?

¹ Professor Barrett H. Clark in the *Arts Gazette*, April, 1922.

14 SOME CONTEMPORARY ARTISTS

There is no particular harm in the great British Public believing that the British painters of to-day are the best in the world—perhaps they are; but if the painters themselves believe it, they are likely to be indulging in fallacies which posterity will explode. British painting is strong to-day because for the past twenty years and more it has continually made use of outside standards of comparison.

Nothing has been more remarkable in our recent domestic art-history than the sterility of the Royal Academy Schools and the rich fertility of the Slade School. While paying lip-service to the Old Masters, the Academy has constantly bolstered up the pretensions of British painters and made reference to their works. The Slade School is different; its tradition was founded by a Frenchman, Alphonse Legros, and its professors and pupils have always kept their eyes on what was being done at Paris. The Slade students studied Ingres while the Piccadilly people were still talking about Leighton. The history of the New English Art Club, an offshoot of the Slade, is very largely the story of French influence on English painters. The Royal

Academy Schools have had no recent history—and in them there is no happiness.

An interesting question arose in May 1921. Had the New English Art Club captured the Royal Academy, or had the Academy captured the New English Art Club? To anybody who has been behind the scenes of art politics, the most exciting events during the past quarter of a century have been brought about by the long duel for power and influence between the Academy and the New English Art Club.

Twenty years ago the members of the New English Art Club had their brushes, their pens, and a school—the Slade School, with which nearly all the most prominent members have been associated either as teachers or students. The Royal Academy also had a school, and it had everything else; all the honours, all the big official positions, and the sympathy of the majority of important journals. Its President was Director of the National Gallery, it controlled the Tate Gallery, it was the leading authority at South Kensington.

How different things are to-day! One by one the Academy's nominees have been ousted

16 SOME CONTEMPORARY ARTISTS

from positions of influence, and their places have been taken by members of or sympathisers with the Club. First Mr D. S. MacColl obtained control of the Tate Gallery, then Mr C. J. Holmes was appointed Director of the National Gallery, later Mr C. J. Collins Baker became Keeper of the National Gallery, and lastly Mr William Rothenstein is made head of the Royal College of Art, South Kensington. To-day the old Royal Academy seems nowhere, and the New English Art Club appears everywhere in authority.

How has this tremendous change come about? It has been effected largely by the power of the Press. The strength of the Club lay in the fact that many of its members were not only gifted and accomplished painters, but were also competent and powerful writers. The New English Art Club laid the foundations of its future triumphs by capturing the Press in its early days. Mr D. S. MacColl, in the *Spectator* and *Saturday Review* (latterly Mr Collins Baker in the last-named weekly), Mr C. J. Holmes in the *Burlington Magazine*, Mr Walter Sickert in the *Speaker*, *New Age*, and *Nineteenth Century*, Mr Roger Fry in the *Athenæum*, *New Statesman*, and the *Nation*,

Mr Bernhard Sickert in the *Academy*—all these and other occasional writers, like Mr William Rothenstein and Mr Charles Ricketts, exerted a powerful influence, not only on the public, but on a younger generation of critics drawn into sympathy with the New English.

Meanwhile the Academy itself retaliated or compromised—according to whichever view you take—by recruiting from the New English Art Club painters whose work had begun to attract popular attention. It began by absorbing Clausen, Sargent, Charles Wellington, Furse, and Mark Fisher; it took in Charles Shannon, Brangwyn, and William Strang; it made a rush after Orpen and got him; it gathered in Philip Connard, Glyn Philpot, and Walter W. Russell; it even swallowed Augustus John, and with him elected Cayley Robinson, and after him Charles Ricketts. It has never stopped absorbing, and it will continue.

This process had been going on for years, but it was only in 1921 that the public at large woke up and realised that something had happened to the Royal Academy. During the war attention was so fully occupied elsewhere that the extent to which the Academy

18 SOME CONTEMPORARY ARTISTS

was purging itself of past errors was hardly noticed. To-day, out of forty painters who are Academicians or Associates, fifty per cent. are former exhibitors at the New English Art Club. Nor does the matter end here, for as we went round the last two summer exhibitions we found many works by other artists whom hitherto we had associated with the New English Art Club.

These last two exhibitions have been rather embarrassing to the professional critic. From sheer force of habit he wanted to go on damning the Royal Academy as he had done since first he learnt to write. Yet when he looked around he found the galleries full of works by painters whom he had praised for years past at the New English exhibitions. He could not honestly say that *all* these artists were now painting less well than they had done ; and yet it went very much against the grain to have to admit that the Academy of the present was better than the Academy of the past. There were still so many dull, senseless, and meretricious pictures ; there were still so many artists of high rank who did not exhibit.

Nevertheless the truth will out. There is a great improvement in the Academy. The

whole standard of British painting has been vastly raised during the past twenty years. It is better and more interesting to-day than it has been since 1850. This advance is represented at the Royal Academy, imperfectly, certainly not completely, but it is represented.

Everything being so satisfactory, what is there to complain about? Only this, that if the Royal Academy has grown to resemble the New English Art Club, what it most resembles to-day is the New English Art Club of 1902. It is still twenty years behind the times.

British art has not stood still during these twenty years. Not only has the Academy failed as yet to secure the support of such distinguished members of the Club as Messrs Muirhead Bone, C. J. Holmes, Lucien Pissarro, Walter Sickert, Wilson Steer, and Henry Tonks—this does not greatly matter, their generation is inside and some of them may follow in due course; but it has altogether failed to attract the best and most original painters of the younger generation. There is little or nothing at the Academy by painters whose work causes a stir in smaller and more

20 SOME CONTEMPORARY ARTISTS

vigorous exhibitions. At Burlington House we may look well-nigh in vain for any manifestation of a new spirit.

Is there a new spirit in art? I believe there is, and that it informs chiefly the work of those painters who experienced war not merely as spectators but as combatants. It is a spirit that dislikes "playing about," and wants to get to the point at once. It is a spirit that is very tolerant in methods, but is exacting as to results. The world has no use for a painter who is only occupied with his own cleverness and content to exercise his brush in flourishing gestures. It expects an artist, like any other man who claims its attention, to have something wise, witty, or beautiful to say, and to say this as clearly and concisely as possible.

Whereas the pre-war painters dallied with nineteenth-century ideas about the supreme importance of execution, the post-war painters are inclined to let execution "go hang" and to concentrate their energies on conception. In the matter of craftsmanship the younger generation has much to learn, and its paint rarely has the "quality" of surface we find in the best work of their elders, but already it

shows signs of possessing far deeper and more intense emotional feeling.

It is too soon to be positive about a new movement which as yet is rich in promise rather than in achievement, but if the work of some—the brothers Stanley and Gilbert Spencer, for example—is yet tentative however interesting, others seem already to have reached a point of definite achievement. Conspicuous among these is another pair of brothers, Paul and John Nash, and these are included among the representatives of the new spirit for the purpose of this book.

The United Kingdom contains to-day about ten thousand professional painters who send to exhibitions and put prices on their works ; perhaps a hundred of them really have something to say and are worthy of serious consideration. Obviously many painters of merit will be neglected in the following pages, because the attempt to be exhaustive cannot and will not be made. Of the older artists who have definitely “ arrived ” there is no need to speak : their work is known and by it they will be judged. But among the artists of the older generation there are some few whose great gifts do not appear even yet to

22 SOME CONTEMPORARY ARTISTS

be fully recognised, and an opportunity has been taken to say something about them. The selection of these and of the younger artists mentioned has been purely arbitrary, but if many have been omitted it is hoped that the few chosen will at least be found representative and symptomatic of the varied ideals which animate British painting to-day.

LUCIEN PISSARRO

II

LUCIEN PISSARRO

I SUPPOSE in his own lifetime there were people, especially in his native town of Augsburg, who regarded Hans Holbein the Younger as "the son of his father," people who would have been astounded and a little scandalised at any contemporary critic who dared to assert that the son was a greater painter than his father. It is a doubtful blessing for any man to be the son of a famous artist. We have been told so often that genius is not necessarily hereditary, that we can hardly believe the son of a genius to be anything but a fool. Even when the talent of the son is undeniable, his art is apt to be dismissed as being merely of secondary importance, and he is damned with faint praise as worthily continuing the tradition of his father.

But for the unfortunate fact of his being the eldest son of Camille Pissarro, the famous

26 SOME CONTEMPORARY ARTISTS

French impressionist painter, Mr Lucien Pissarro would probably have been recognised many years ago as being the greatest living landscape painter. Certainly there is no artist working in this country who has mirrored so beautifully and truthfully the sunlit aspects of our English countryside. Before one of his landscapes we do not think of his father or of any other painter, we are taken straight back to nature itself ; and once we are well acquainted with his work we can hardly travel through rural England in sunshine without being reminded constantly of pictures we have seen by Lucien Pissarro.

The word "sunshine" is intentionally stressed because, though he has painted other aspects, it is in the rendering of sunlit landscape that Mr Pissarro excels. Constable held himself to be a "natural" painter, and so within his limits he was ; but look at a Constable to-day and say if his greens are exactly the greens we see when the sun shines on Surrey, Devonshire, East Anglia, or Yorkshire. The greens of Constable are darker, generally speaking, than the greens we see in sunlit trees and fields : the greens of Lucien Pissarro are absolutely true.

While so much must be said for the sake of truth, it would be injudicious to claim the accuracy of his colour to be the chief, or even the greatest quality in the work of Mr Pissarro. It is one of his qualities, a quality which distinguishes him pre-eminently among contemporary painters, but we cannot say for certain how it will appear to posterity. The landscapes of Constable must have looked much more brilliant when they were freshly painted than they appear to us. It is the fate of all pictures to grow darker, more or less, with the tone of time. But though it is possible that the Pissarros which sparkle before us to-day may lose something of their brilliance in a century or two, we do not believe that they will lose their bloneness. Leaving absolutes aside, we are confident that even then they will relatively be truer than a Constable to nature's colouring. Further, they will always possess one colour quality that is absent in a Constable, and that is their searching and delicate analysis of the colour in shadows.

Lucien Pissarro is a true heir of the French impressionists in his tireless pursuit of the colour in shadow. The opening up of that

28 SOME CONTEMPORARY ARTISTS

pursuit was the great achievement of the men of 1870, and its development by the younger impressionist painters of the period was the culminating point of the movement towards ever-increasing realism that had been the main tendency of European painting for some five hundred years. The palette of Constable was based on the three primaries ; the palette of Pissarro, like that of Renoir, Monet, and Sisley, is based on the tints of the rainbow. To Constable sunlight was a golden glow or a silver glitter ; to the impressionists it is a prismatic sparkle. But if a difference exists in the treatment of the lights, it is still more pronounced in the treatment of the shadows. Examine the shadows of a Constable and you will find them dull and comparatively lifeless because of their uniformity and conventional neutrality. Examine the shadows in a Lucien Pissarro and you will find them full of life by reason of their variety and positive colour.

In this aspect of his painting Lucien Pissarro certainly continues the tradition of his father, but he has not stopped where his father left off ; he has developed the tradition with added science and knowledge, and com-

paring the work of Camille with that of Lucien we see that the work of the son, and especially his later work, is in a higher pitch of colour. As a colourist Mr Lucien Pissarro is acknowledged as a master by the most eminent of his contemporary painters. There is no man living who has a more profound knowledge of the science of colour, or a more discriminating eye for its observation in nature. But knowledge alone will not make a man a great painter. It was all very well for Turner to silence a tiresome questioner by telling her that he mixed his colours "with brains," but he knew in his heart that this was only the first step to great achievement: the second is to lay on the colours with feeling. In Mr Pissarro's landscapes there are both knowledge and feeling. The knowledge helps him to extricate colour from obscurity, to perceive the predominating tints in a patch of mysterious shadow; but his knowledge is always controlled by taste, and in the end it is emotion that dictates the blending and harmony of the statement. The truth is there, but the truth is not the greatest thing in it; the greatest is the harmony that results in beauty. To see truly and to record precisely the actual colouring of nature is

30 SOME CONTEMPORARY ARTISTS

not enough, one day the camera itself may do as much ; but to harmonise those colours into a picture that will be a joy for ever, will always require the eye, and the hand, and the heart of an artist.

Though colour plays so beautiful a part in the pictorial work of Lucien Pissarro, it is not the only nor perhaps the most distinctive quality in his paintings. He is equally distinguished as a colourist among designers and as a designer among colourists. As a colourist he is at least equal to his father ; as a designer he is immensely his father's superior.

Among all their merits lay a weakness in the work of the earlier impressionists—Degas always excepted. Constantly pre-occupied with registering fleeting effects of light, their sense of form and mass was imperfect. Devoted to colour, they neglected composition. To Claude Monet and to the elder Pissarro even a great cathedral was not a substantial structure of intricate pattern, but merely a surface for reflecting the mirage of sunlight. Deliberate arrangement is rarely found in their pictures, and when now and again they form an agreeable linear pattern, we feel that

this is the result of accident rather than of design.

These defects do not occur in the work of Lucien Pissarro. His sense of form is firm without the ferociousness thrust into it by some of our younger and more revolutionary painters. The buildings in his village scenes have weight and mass, the trees in his landscapes are firmly rooted and their foliage has density as well as breadth. Ever present is the sense of pattern, and in his later landscapes the definite design has become more and more pronounced. But his composition is not a formal cut-and-dried affair constructed on received classical precedents. His design is altogether different from that which we find in a Richard Wilson, a Corot, or an early Turner. We do not find him balancing his picture on either side of a diagonal, for example, with one dark triangle and one light triangle, with a little light in the dark, and a little dark in the light. Pissarro has no recipe for composition, and his landscapes often have the unexpectedness of balance that charms us in the work of the Japanese designers. His design is as "natural" as his colour; that is to say, it is evolved from the subject itself,

32 SOME CONTEMPORARY ARTISTS

suggested by the lay of the land or by the lines of the scene before his eyes. From the tangled network of nature the artist selects, modifies, accentuates, till he gives us the essence of its character in the design of his picture.

If France gave Lucien Pissarro his science of colour, we may claim that England helped him to a sense of design ; and in this respect as well as in virtue of over twenty years' residence in this country, we may surely claim him now as a member of the British School. Born in Paris in 1863, the young Lucien grew up among the impressionists and neo-impressionists. From his childhood he was soaked in the science of atmospheric and complementary colours, and though he never attended any art school, there was not one which could teach him so much about colour as he learnt from his father and his father's friends. He showed at the last exhibition of the Impressionists, and he was one of the early members of the Société des Artistes Indépendants, with whom he exhibited regularly from 1886 to 1894. With his father he passed through a phase of rigid divisionism (or pointillism), and emerged from it with his

colour perception sharpened but with his liberty of expression unimpaired. Admirable and delightful as many of these early paintings are, they have not the strong personal flavour of his later work, and had there been no sequel these pictures of the 'eighties and early 'nineties might perhaps be dismissed as "school" works, as good examples of the Impressionist School.

But fortunately for him and for us he did not stay in Paris to remain there as one of a crowd. As a child he had come to London with his father in 1870, and after he had grown up he paid many visits to England, where he settled in 1893. Here he came into touch with William Morris, in whose work at the Kelmscott Press he was particularly interested. Early success is rarely beneficial to an artist, and probably the art of Lucien Pissarro was strengthened by reason of his not finding painting very remunerative when he was a young man in the twenties. For, failing a ready market for his sense of colour, he was led to turn his attention to printing and engraving. He set up the Eragny Press, and was known as a producer of beautiful books long before his powers as a painter caused

34 SOME CONTEMPORARY ARTISTS

him to be elected a member of the New English Art Club. In executing illustrations for these hand-printed books he necessarily concentrated on design in a way that no other impressionist painter had done; and the time that he devoted to design in black-and-white was afterwards to have a re-invigorating effect on his oil painting. For some ten years his accomplishment as a painter was overshadowed by his growing fame as a wood-engraver and book-printer. A quarter of a century ago Richard Muther in his history of modern art mentions Lucien Pissarro as one of the most eminent of contemporary wood-engravers, but the German historian has little or nothing to say of him as a painter.

To painters Lucien Pissarro has always been a painter, and to him, when he could be got to talk about painting, even the most dogmatic would listen with reverence; he knew, and they knew that he knew. But to collectors and to the majority of critics he was, up to about 1910, regarded as being first and foremost an eminent wood-engraver and producer of hand-printed books. As a painter he was "one of the impressionists,"

and the analysis was not carried further. Gradually his contributions to the exhibitions of the New English Art Club attracted more and more notice. The beauty and truth of the colour in his landscapes had always been evident, and now the insistence of his design was beginning to tell. In 1913, when the painter was fifty, *The Railway Cutting, Acton*, was bought for the Leeds Art Gallery, and a little later one of his landscapes was bought for the nation by the Contemporary Art Society. A few collectors awoke to the fact that he was a painter, and a great painter, so that at last the artist, now in his fifties, was able to relax his wood-engraving and book-printing and devote more of his time to painting.

Curiously enough, in England, the one European country which has been inclined to esteem landscape as highly as figure-painting, the Impressionist School of painting has never been really popular. One reason may be that it has never yet been very well known, and it has largely been condemned on hearsay. By one generation it has been thought to be slovenly; by another it has been thought to be mechanical. It is a

36 SOME CONTEMPORARY ARTISTS

merciful dispensation of Providence that Lucien Pissarro has been sent here to teach us better. Already his influence has been felt in British painting, and it will surely be felt more and more as time goes on. Nobody who regards the precision of his touch, the delicacy of his drawing, and the niceness of the whole execution, can read slovenliness into any work of his. Consider the rigid solidity of the telegraph-post in his picture at Leeds, and the sense of weight and movement in the puffing engine in the distance.

Nor is a painter to be considered mechanical because he places each touch of pigment exactly where it is wanted, and lets it stay there, instead of smearing it vaguely about his canvas and then covering it up with other touches. The really inspired worker does not wander about, he goes straight to his point by the most direct route. That is what Lucien Pissarro does, and within his method, which is the mosaical method adopted by many of the world's greatest painters, he permits himself and exercises the greatest freedom. The very freedom of his art from *clichés*, preconceptions and formal conventions, precludes the idea of mechanism. During the

past ten years at the New English, the Allied Artists', the Goupil Gallery, Mr Pissarro has put forth series after series of paintings eloquently expressing his joy of England in spring and summer time. Not that he is blind to the beauty of any season. From winter he has culled many exquisite snow scenes in which the refinement of his observation is most beautifully expressed. The best of them can more than stand comparison with Claude Monet's famous *Effet de Neige à Vétheuil*, now in the Lane Collection at the Tate Gallery, for while the myriad tints of sun-illuminated snow are given with delicate precision and harmony, the Pissarros possess in addition a charm of decorative pattern submerged in the atmosphere of the Monet. We can recall too more than one painting in which Mr Pissarro has paid homage to the full glory of autumn tints or pursued the elusive colour which lies hidden beneath a grey sky; but while he can find something to rejoice at in all weathers, we instinctively associate his brush with the fine days which every healthy being enjoys.

For Lucien Pissarro is pre-eminently a healthy painter, moved by the simple outdoor

38 SOME CONTEMPORARY ARTISTS

beauty of homely scenes. The decorative patchwork of fields in cultivation, a road over the North Downs studded with self-sown pines and with hills in the distance, a be-hedged and tree-fringed lane leading to a village whose buildings are seen through a veil of atmosphere—these are the familiar elements of some of his most bewitching pictures. For all their wonderful precision and truth to nature, there is in these paintings no parade of the technical dexterity with which the craftsman is equipped. Each canvas is wrought with a quiet perfection that conceals its art and is eloquent of the tender emotion which the loveliness of nature inspires in the artist. At no time does he celebrate his own cleverness—the deadly sin in art; but with the humility of a great soul he pours out his worship of the goodness of light and of the infinite beauties of the visible world. Himself a past master in the crafts of painting and design, Lucien Pissarro is not the man to exaggerate the importance of mere craftsmanship. “The most difficult thing,” he once observed, “is not to paint as the Old Masters painted; it is to feel as the Old Masters felt.” Feeling, that is the secret of all great art, for

without it mere dexterity becomes an empty flourish ; and the most wonderful thing about Lucien Pissarro is that with the keenly alert brain of a man he has preserved the unspoilt heart of a child. Throughout his life he has never lost the faculty of wonder, and amazed, like Stevenson's child, at the " number of things " in the world, his happiness has bubbled over into paint. As a tree is known by its fruit, so is a man revealed by his art, and while from the colour of Lucien Pissarro we may deduce the natural sweetness of his disposition, his design testifies to the habitual elevation of his thought. The very homeliness of his subjects bears witness to the integrity of his purpose. We never find any adventitious aid to interest in one of his pictures. " There are no noble subjects in art," he has written ; " there are only harmonies of line and colour." To seize the point of this challenging statement we must remember that when Lucien Pissarro first came to England the Pre-Raphaelite movement was on the ebb, and among its later followers there was a tendency to bolster up mediocre painting with the support of associated ideas. It was a period when the

40 SOME CONTEMPORARY ARTISTS

“ literary picture ” was in vogue in England. Against this belief in the virtue of a “ noble subject ” or symbolism, Mr Pissarro stated the case very clearly in his too little known monograph on Rossetti :—

“ Is the rose greater than the cabbage from a purely pictorial point of view ? It depends entirely upon how far the painter is able to reveal the beauty, the harmony of form and colour of either. The symbolistic appanage of the rose will not suffice of itself to make a picture, nor for the lack of these symbols may we condemn the cabbage.”

While it has been the fashion hitherto to regard the painting of Lucien Pissarro as a continuation of the French impressionist movement, it is not extravagant to hazard that history may eventually see in it also a continuation of the naturalism which marked the work of the early Pre-Raphaelites. In prophetic words Ruskin warned his contemporaries of the two paths which lay before the Pre-Raphaelite following : “ If their sympathies with the early artists lead them into mediævalism or Romanism, they will of course come to nothing.” On the other hand he wrote : “ If they adhere to their principles,

and paint nature as it is around them, with the help of modern science, with the earnestness of the men of the thirteenth and fourteenth centuries, they will, as I said, found a new and noble school in England.” Now this is exactly what Lucien Pissarro has done. He has painted nature as it was around him, with the help of modern science and with the fervour and purity of the early Italians. The Pre-Raphaelite following, as we all know, came to nothing, because either they wandered away into mediævalism or they neglected the help that modern science, and particularly optics, could have given them. If Ruskin is as true a prophet in the one case as he has proved to be in the other, then posterity may yet look to Lucien Pissarro as one who helped to found “a new and noble school in England.”

WALTER SICKERT

III

WALTER SICKERT

IF there is one British artist about whom we may venture to feel positive that his work will count in the future as in the past, that man is Walter Sickert. We are confident that his place is sure not only because of the intrinsic qualities of his work, but also because of the impregnable position he occupies historically. It is impossible to imagine any critic of the future writing helpfully about twentieth-century British painting without mentioning the name of Walter Sickert. Historically he is the most important link between the great French painters of the nineteenth century and those English painters of the early twentieth century in whom we fancy we can detect the seed of greatness. He has been a great influence both by example and precept, both as an artist and as a teacher, and under his leadership the Westminster School of Art

46 SOME CONTEMPORARY ARTISTS

became a power in artistic London second only to the Slade.

Further, if foreign opinion be a safe guide to the verdict of posterity, we may remember that at the beginning of this century Walter Sickert was almost the only English painter taken seriously in Paris. "Yes, we know Sickert, but what other painters have you?" This was the often-repeated formula which twenty years ago or more used to greet the visitor who tried to impress on Parisian dealers and art collectors that there was an interesting school of painters in England, and though most Parisians have now heard of one or two more, the formula is not greatly varied even to-day.

This appreciation of Sickert in Paris is not due merely to the fact that he resided there for several years. Many, many other English artists have lived in Paris for as long as or longer than Sickert, but none of them have been able to impress French connoisseurs to the same extent. These others may or may not have had merits, but they were not European painters. Now this is exactly what Sickert has been ever since he broke away from the domination of Whistler. Among Sickert's paintings the French expert could

feel at home, for he could recognise that these were continuing the main stream of the great European tradition of painting.

It is easy to overestimate the importance of the connection between Sickert and Whistler. The influence of the latter was neither profound, deep, nor lasting, though it is still not uncommon to hear Sickert spoken of as a "pupil of Whistler." That he certainly was for a time, when he was a young man, a student fresh from Heatherley's School of Art ; but even the earliest Sickerts only show a moderate Whistlerism, in no instance do they ever approach to slavish imitation. The Whistler influence is most pronounced, perhaps, in the slim silhouette of *Aubrey Beardsley*, a very early Sickert full-length portrait. There is just a touch of it also in another early painting, the delightful stage-portrait of *Miss Minnie Cunningham* in a red frock, which is one of the jewels of a private collection in Scarborough. But another music-hall picture painted somewhere about the same time, *The Sisters Lloyd*, has very little of Whistler in it, and possesses stereoscopic qualities, a sense of the distance stretching right back, a background quivering with light and atmosphere,

48 SOME CONTEMPORARY ARTISTS

which was certainly not got from the Anglo-American master.

Probably the most important thing that Whistler ever did for Sickert was to bring him into touch with the French impressionists. Certainly he learnt more from Degas than he ever learnt from Whistler, though a painting by Sickert is no more like a painting by Degas than it is like a painting by Whistler. One of the differences is the method of draughtsmanship employed—about which I shall have something to say later; and another lies in the colour, which has a shimmer and a sparkle we do not find in the oil paintings of Degas or of Whistler.

Still it was in the Boulevard St Jacques, after he had parted from Whistler, that Sickert formed his style, and this style though intensely personal was chiefly affected by French influence. He was undoubtedly impressed by the point of view of Degas, by his subject-matter, by his drawing, by his design; but in point of colour he found for himself a fascinating halfway house between Whistler and Pissarro.

He has never, to my knowledge, painted very large pictures; the *grandes machines* of

the Salons were not in his line, but he steadily built up a reputation by the exquisiteness of his easel pictures. He painted indoors and outdoors, landscapes and street-scenes—Venice and Dieppe have been for him very happy sketching grounds—he painted portraits and, above all, the life of the people, interiors of theatres and music-halls, of middle-class homes and of the dwellings of the humble. You may say if you like that Sickert is a genre painter, but his genre, like that of the Little Masters of Holland, has been the common life of the community around him. Young or old, there has never been any question of vitality in a painting by Sickert ; it is peculiarly his *metier* to present us with “ a slice of life,” and to present it in a fascinating form, quivering with light, atmosphere, and colour. He has never stopped still, never fallen into a groove, never merely repeated himself, but adhering to the main direction he chose in his youth he has kept his art fresh and allowed it to ripen into maturity.

I refuse to remember how long ago it was when, discussing some youth of promise, Sickert let fall in my presence this pregnant remark : “ It is so easy to have talent at

50 SOME CONTEMPORARY ARTISTS

twenty-five, so difficult to possess it at fifty."

Sickert entered the danger zone some years ago—he was born in 1860 ; but that he himself has surmounted the difficulty is abundantly proved by his later paintings, drawings, and etchings. His talent is as fresh and vigorous to-day as ever, so that recognising him to be one of the most personal and original artists of our time, all that remains is to decide just how great he really is.

I suppose everybody now recognises that he is a great draughtsman, a draughtsman who uses the broken line of Rembrandt in preference to the sweeping contours of Holbein. Study his drawings and his etchings—for Sickert is a great etcher also though he has been extraordinarily neglected by print-collectors—and you will note how Sickert builds up form in these, as in his paintings, by touches of light and shade rather than by silhouetting anatomical form. This perfectly legitimate method of drawing, employed by so many of the world's greatest masters, is never so easily comprehended by the public as the outline method of a Phil May or a Caran d'Ache. Sickert's use of the broken

line has saved him from the danger of ever becoming a popular illustrator ; but it has placed him among the masters of modern etching.

On the other hand, several admirers of his art, noting how he builds up his drawing, are apt to consider just because this light and shade, his "*chiaroscuro*," is so wonderful, that Sickert is "not really a colourist." This is the one point about Sickert that remains controversial among people whose opinion counts.

From my point of view the proper reply to this is that an artist is a fine colourist, not so much by his selection of colours as by reason of his powers of harmonising the tints selected. It is no more necessary to use bright and vivid colours to be a "colourist," than it is to shout in order to be heard clearly and distinctly. Now though Sickert can use and has used light and delicate schemes of colour—notably in some of his Venetian subjects—we are never tempted to call it bright or vivid. His usual range of colour is less wide than that of some painters who have been greatly influenced by him, Harold Gilman and Spencer Gore for example ; and it

52 SOME CONTEMPORARY ARTISTS

is only rarely that he paints those brilliant effects of full sunlight which attracted the earlier French impressionists.

The truth would seem to be this. Though in many respects the Elisha of Degas rather than of Whistler, Walter Sickert takes after his first master in this one respect that he has a partiality for low tones. For this reason his colour is usually reserved and reticent, but within the chosen range it is exquisitely refined and harmonious. Further, having drawn still more from the French impressionists than ever Whistler did, Sickert in rendering his favourite themes of dawn and twilight gives a sparkle of light which we do not get in the still nocturnes of Whistler. This is partly the result of his method of painting, a method not derived from the large planes of Manet and of Whistler, but from the small touches of Pissarro and Monet. This method of building up a painting, like a mosaic, with small touches of pigment, the *procédé par la tache*, as it is called, enables an artist to grapple closely and intimately with his subject, so that the French genre painters who have made use of it—Bonnard and Vuillard being the most eminent of them—

have been styled the "intimistes" and their painting "intimisme."

It is to this development of impressionism that the painting of Sickert properly belongs, and my belief is that he has carried it further and thereby obtained effects more beautiful than any artist of any other country. Many years ago at Bernheim's gallery in the Boulevard de la Madeleine at Paris I remember seeing a painting by Sickert among pictures by the most eminent of France's modern and contemporary painters. This Sickert showed the partly covered body of a girl, stretched out on a bed under a window through which streamed the light of early morning. It was full of exquisite silver and pearly tints, the iridescence of the flesh and the play of colour among the lights and shadows of the bed-clothes were most subtly observed and delicately recorded. There was nothing more true, more tender, or more beautiful in the gallery. I was proud that day to think there was at least one English painter who could take and hold his place among the masterpieces of modern France. I am proud to think Sickert still holds that place. I believe he always will.

54 SOME CONTEMPORARY ARTISTS

As a chronicler of plebeian contemporary life, the realism of Sickert appears at times a little shocking to those who fail to relish the gentle irony of his outlook. But while I admit a certain irony in some of Sickert's paintings, I deny that it ever amounts to cynicism. He is never so savagely bitter as Toulouse-Lautrec was, he is never cruel as even Degas is sometimes. It is not to any French painter, but to the French writer Anatole France, that we can most justly liken the irony at times of Walter Sickert, for his irony also is gentle and mild, full of pity and love for poor humanity. His fellow creatures often amuse Sickert, and he makes them amuse us, but I have never yet seen a painting, drawing, or etching in which they clearly disgust him. He can often see and make us see a beauty in mean people as in mean streets, and in his passionate pursuit of contemporary life in all its aspects he treasures up its saving graces as one of the most precious elements of truth. Sickert is never a falsifier, and while he would be ashamed to make any subject sickly with sentimentality, he is too true an artist to cover any canvas without some show of feeling. Some of his Camden

Town interiors have been called morbid, but the artist was only aiming at the truth, and the truth always contains beauty. Even the scene of a revolting murder may have a pitying element of beauty in its light, its colour, and design.

The truth should never offend us, and if Sickert has been talked about largely because of his paintings of "low life" in low tones, it must also be acknowledged that he can transfigure even a sordid theme by the glittering magic of his style. Moreover, these low-life pictures are only one phase of Sickert's art, an art which in its infinite variety of medium and subject age cannot wither nor custom stale.

Who that has seen them can forget his *Blind Man* and *The Hat Shop, Dieppe*? These pictures have a wealth of thought which, unhappily, few modern paintings contain. Surely it is a virtue in Sickert that, though every picture he paints has its own æsthetic charm and beauty, he has had the courage to probe the dark and ugly corners of modern civilisation and to tell the truth of what he has seen there. The reputation of painters who are interesting by reason of their paint-

56 SOME CONTEMPORARY ARTISTS

ing fluctuates with the fashions that come and go ; the reputation of painters who hold our attention by their perception and expression of life may be acquired slowly, but once acquired it is lasting. Among many talented painters *d'un si beau passé* in his own generation, Walter Sickert stands out supreme and distinguished by his firm grasp of life.

JAMES PRYDE

IV

JAMES PRYDE

IN 1894 a Poster Exhibition was held at the old Aquarium in Westminster, and all artistic London was thrilled by the things shown there by two artists hitherto unknown. Their work was entirely different from any posters London had seen before : their figures were clean silhouettes, they used simple masses of colour without shading, their design was as simple and rigid as a stencil. Soon these arresting posters began to appear on the hoardings, and for the first time in English history the æsthetically inclined began to stop on the pavement and discuss the merit of placarded advertisements. Even so national an institution as the Theatre Royal, Drury Lane, was touched by the new movement, and in the winter of 1895-1896 its pantomime, *Cinderella*, gained publicity and more artistic prestige than it has ever obtained before or since, owing to its display of a Beggarstaff poster.

60 SOME CONTEMPORARY ARTISTS

Thus the fame of the Beggarstaff Brothers reached me in my schooldays, though I think it was at Cambridge that I was first initiated into the secret of their identity. "Beggarstaff Brothers" was the name adopted for their poster work by James Pryde and William Nicholson, friends and brothers-in-law, for William Nicholson had married Mabel Pryde. It was reported that they were Edinburgh artists, and even in recent years I have heard Nicholson alluded to as a Scottish painter, though as a matter of fact he was born at Newark-on-Trent in 1872. But Pryde is a Scotsman and Nicholson's senior, having been born at St Andrews in 1869. Both artists had studied in Paris—Pryde is officially a "pupil of Bouguereau," of all people!—and both had there been attracted by the striking poster work of Toulouse-Lautrec which, though never directly imitated, inspired them to strike out new paths in England.

Nobody, I suppose, will ever know exactly what part each played in the work of the Beggarstaff Brothers, but I have often thought that Pryde's part in the combination must have been not unlike that of James Rice in the literary collaboration of Besant and Rice.

Certainly William Nicholson's paintings, admitting all their qualities and merits, lack something that the posters of the Beggarstaff Brothers possessed. One of the many things in contemporary art which perplex and bewilder me is how it has come about that William Nicholson has managed to get himself more widely known than James Pryde. Not that Pryde himself is unknown. His work is honoured abroad in Paris, Berlin, Munich, Dresden, St Louis, Pittsburg, and elsewhere; he has long been one of the pillars of our own International Society of Sculptors, Painters, and Gravers; but though highly esteemed by the few he has somehow escaped being a well-known figure to the many.

I think there is a reason for this. After they had jointly won fame and popularity by their poster work, Pryde allowed his brother-in-law to get ahead of him with the People. Nicholson, it will be remembered, did not at once come to the front as a painter, but laid the foundations of his individual reputation by a remarkable series of woodcuts in colour. These masterly portraits, which first appeared serially in *The New Review*, were afterwards published in book form: his *Alphabet*,

62 SOME CONTEMPORARY ARTISTS

Almanac of Twelve Sports, and *London Types*—all three published in 1898—tremendously widened the base of Nicholson's popularity and made his name known to thousands who rarely visit picture exhibitions.

Now Pryde has never done anything of this kind. Since he gave up doing posters, he has practically retired from the popular field. A fastidious and self-exacting painter, his output has been comparatively small ; but if small in quantity it has been correspondingly precious in quality. His paintings are the sort for which collectors compete, for which they will compete still more keenly, it is probable, in the future. But they make small appeal to the uneducated or to the vulgar. To begin with, their subjects are a little mysterious. Pryde is not exactly a realist, nor can we call him an out-and-out romanticist ; indeed he is an artist whom it is exceedingly difficult to place. Neither is he a painter of architecture, though architectural motives play so great a part in very many of his pictures. We are rarely certain in a painting by Pryde what is the period of the subject : it may have an eighteenth-century look, and we are quite content to leave it at that. We

rarely know exactly what is happening in the picture ; but on the other hand we do feel intensely that something is going to happen. There is a strong feeling of latent drama in all Pryde's painting, and one of the things in which he supremely excels is Dramatic Design.

What we always find in a Pryde is a stage beautifully set, a scene which so bewitches us by the nobility of its design, by the monumental splendour of its masses, by rich glows of colour from a whole of harmonious sombreness, that we catch our breath with delight at the spectacle as the curtain goes up long before we have any knowledge of what action will take place there.

When we look around at our picture exhibitions to-day we are inclined to pride ourselves on the skill and accomplishment of our painters, there are so many of them and they are so clever. But what we ought to ask is : What have they done, what are they doing with their skill ? Well, most of them are content to mirror the pleasant superficialities of life—the seaside, the country, the theatre, weddings, parties, the river, costume-balls—and even in these we rarely find any intense expression of the *joie-de-vivre*. The emotions

64 SOME CONTEMPORARY ARTISTS

expressed are mild, respectable, and gentlemanly. But how many of our artists attempt to grapple seriously with the great realities of life ?

Pryde has done it, though, as already indicated, he has made hardly any claim to be regarded as a realist. Among all his paintings there are none more impressive than his Bed pictures, that great series in which he has sought to show the part the Bed plays in human life from the cradle to the grave. In one of them, *The Doctor*, he has even dared to declare that birth, after all, is an event of some importance ; yet when this picture was exhibited prim visitors, a little shocked at Pryde's decorative and dignified daring, would turn their heads away quickly and seek safety before one of his brother-in-law's flower-paintings or portraits.

Many years ago somebody speaking of the Beggarstaff posters said that they were "as racy of the soil as the caricatures of Rowlandson, the paintings of Morland, or the drawings of Charles Keene." That is equally true of Pryde's paintings : they are intensely English ; only I should prefer to substitute the name of Hogarth for that of Morland.

There is a good deal that is Hogarthian in Pryde; and Hogarth was the painter most racy of the soil that England ever produced. The satiric element in Hogarth hardly ever peeps out in Pryde; but he has his dramatic sense, his dignity, his powers of staging and, above all, his wide humanity.

For the human note, as well as decorative splendour, can be found in Pryde's painting. Take, for example, his picture *The Red Bed*. It has that sense of drama which we always find in a Pryde even when, as here, it is rather mysterious and we are not quite sure what it is all about. We feel as if we had stepped into the middle of a Maeterlinckian play and had missed the first act and the beginning of the second. But, despite our bewilderment, we feel that something important is happening, and that it would be well worth our while to find out what it is; and so, though the action is not clear, our attention is held and all our mind is enveloped in the atmosphere the artist has created.

That, at any rate, is how I felt when I looked at *The Red Bed* when it was shown at the Grosvenor in 1919; it is how I feel about many pictures by Pryde. I cannot explain

66 SOME CONTEMPORARY ARTISTS

them, but they "get" me ; and I believe we shall never be able to fix Pryde properly till we have that long-expected and shamefully deferred one-man exhibition of his paintings. Then, if ever it comes in his lifetime, when we have had some chance to see a representative gathering of his work as a whole, instead of having to feed ourselves on occasional pictures scattered in mixed exhibitions throughout the years—when that day comes we may be able to understand Pryde's work better, and to learn, if we have not done so already, that this man is a stupendous artist.

C. J. HOLMES

V

C. J. HOLMES

CURIOUSLY enough, although his art is at the very opposite pole of landscape painting to that of Lucien Pissarro, Sir Charles John Holmes has arrived at distinction in painting by a somewhat similar route. For after a distinguished scholastic career at Eton and Brasenose, Oxford—where he was Classical Scholar in 1887—C. J. Holmes first came into prominence in the art world in connection with the Vale Press, of which he was manager from 1896 to 1903. In the production of the hand-printed books of this Press, he was associated with Ricketts and Charles Shannon ; and though there is not the slightest trace of either of those artists having had any influence on his painting, nevertheless we may conclude that in his case also an atmosphere of book-designing indirectly caused him to absorb a sense of the importance of pattern in picture-making. This

70 SOME CONTEMPORARY ARTISTS

sense he certainly shares with Lucien Pissarro, but it is almost the only one they have in common.

In their two very different and distinct ways of regarding landscape, Lucien Pissarro and C. J. Holmes are supreme. For actual truth of colouring in an English sunlit countryside, no painter has surpassed Lucien Pissarro, who, to a delicate and subtle perception of colour, has added a genius for distinguished and truly inventive design. The iridescence of nature has never appealed to C. J. Holmes, who, Cornish by birth and of Cumberland by choice, has always preferred nature's gaunt aspects, and has often obtained his most telling effects by summarising the grandeur of her crags and masses, or by moving contrasts of transient factories with the eternal hills. He has lived through the era of impressionism and has been completely untouched by it, except that he has, to a certain extent, reacted from it; and because of this reaction, the development of his landscape painting has been something not altogether unlike a jump from Richard Wilson to post-impressionism.

Now that he is Director of the National

Gallery and altogether a very distinguished person, there can be no great harm, I fancy, in saying that it was the writings of Holmes rather than his pictures that first attracted attention. There was a time when he was more widely known, certainly more widely esteemed, as an art critic than as a painter. As a writer he was already somebody when he became editor of *The Burlington Magazine* in 1903. But he was astonishingly little known as a painter in 1904, when he was elected a member of the New English Art Club, although in the same year he had been appointed Slade Professor of Fine Art at the University of Oxford. I remember one of his early contributions to the New English Art Club—a view near Naples, an oil-painting, rich but dark in colour, “old-mastery,” but already showing that sense of design he was afterwards to accentuate. It was good in quality, but it was not the sort of picture to arrest a visitor in a modern exhibition.

It was the water-colours rather than the oil-paintings of Holmes that first forced people to sit up and take notice of him as a painter. In this medium the swift sureness of his summary execution found its happiest ex-

72 SOME CONTEMPORARY ARTISTS

pression, and the simplification of his synthetic treatment of landscape was more readily acceptable in a water-colour than in oils. The exhibition of his water-colours at the Carfax Gallery was the first milestone in his triumphant progress as a painter.

It may be argued, very likely with truth, that C. J. Holmes is the sort of man who would have got to the top eventually whatever style in painting he had adopted; but it is none the less true that some part of the eminence as a painter he enjoys to-day is due to his invention of a new genre in landscape. His achievement in this direction became definite in another exhibition held at the Carfax Gallery in May 1919, and these "Industrial Landscapes" included oil-paintings as well as water-colours.

Many years ago the rumour went round that the inimitable S. H. Sime was abandoning black-and-white work for landscape painting, and when I investigated the rumour at Sime's home in Surrey one afternoon, I found that half of it was true. Everybody knows that Sime did not abandon black-and-white work, though we do not see so much of it as some of us wish; but it was true that Sime

had begun oil-painting; it was true that he wanted to do landscapes; and I well remember his explaining to me that what he particularly wanted to do was to "get away from this agricultural idea of landscape."

Now just exactly what S. H. Sime wanted to do, C. J. Holmes has done. Sime's way—or one of them—of getting away from agriculture was to paint a forest with little wolves, all green eyes and red tongues, peering out between the trees. But though I remember his picture vividly across the span of twenty years—and that in itself is a tribute considering the thousands of paintings we all of us forget—I confess that Sime's fantastic vision seems to me a less sure escape from agriculture than the industrialism of Holmes. His way has been to commemorate in paint the manner in which industrialism is eating up the fair expanse of our countryside; and although the fact itself may be deplored, the work of C. J. Holmes proves that this incursion has its compensations in the new realms of beauty it presents to a sensitive artist.

I know factories in general, and factory-chimneys in particular, are supposed to be ugly things disfiguring the earth, but all on

74 SOME CONTEMPORARY ARTISTS

which the sun shines contains the seed of beauty ; and seen from a distance, environed by trees and green fields, bathed in light or veiled in atmosphere, these utilitarian buildings—which often have the intrinsic merits of simplicity and massiveness—may take on an aspect of beauty and appear as magical and fascinating as a fairy palace.

These are the aspects which C. J. Holmes has captured in his oil-paintings and water-colours, and possibly they can be fully appreciated only by those who know the North of England, and know it well. This I add because it is a merit in his pictures that they are true to what we see. There is no deliberate falsifying : the point of view is carefully chosen so as to get the best and most telling design from the actual scene, and this design is then emphasised by insistence on the contours and by simplification in the drawing of details. The colour also is simplified and conventionalised, the aim of the artist being to secure a flat decorative pattern from the whole. No attempt is made to give a searching analysis of prismatic colour. Holmes is not an impressionist but a “synthesist.” His paintings may lack the sparkle

of a Pissarro or a Clausen, their aim is not his ; but they have their own beauty in their formal dignity of design and in their austere harmony of still colour.

While it is right to lay stress on his invention of the industrial-landscape, it would be wrong to forget that Holmes has painted far more pictures of other subjects. He has put forth a long series of paintings and water-colours of the Lake Country, and he has constantly varied his sketching ground and found congenial aspects in other parts of the country. At the beginning of this year (1922) he broke new ground by exhibiting a marine painting at the New English Art Club. In *The Sea Wall* emphasis was again given to volumes, the painter's preoccupation having been with the grey masses of tossing water, with its movement and design rather than with its colour. It was impressive in its gloomy grandeur, though there was more joyousness in the fuller colour of his *Cottages at Colby* in the same exhibition. Latterly Sir C. J. Holmes has been paying increasing attention to colour in his oil-paintings. *The Pool on the Marsh*, shown a little later at the Grosvenor Galleries, glowed with rich, sumptuous colour,

and in this respect and in its quality of paint is one of the painter's finest works as yet. But it is not impressionist colour, it is nearer to the lusciousness of Richard Wilson than to the luminism of Claude Monet; and whereas the impressionist masters laid stress on the inexhaustible variety of nature, the tendency of Holmes is rather to insist on the eternal simplicity of her majestic forms. This accentuation of simplicity, of the grandeur of design in the everlasting forms of nature, is the constant factor in the art of C. J. Holmes.

WILLIAM ROTHENSTEIN

VI

WILLIAM ROTHENSTEIN

IT is one of life's little ironies that Mr William Rothenstein, perhaps the most academic artist we possess to-day, should still be outside the Royal Academy while so many of his old colleagues of the New English Art Club—far less orthodox than he—have been elected Associates. When I call Mr Rothenstein academic, I am aware that I may be accused of trying to belittle his art, because it is seldom that this adjective is now used in its proper sense or otherwise than as a term of disparagement. It is a misfortune—for which our Royal Academy in the past has been greatly to blame—that when the word “academic” is mentioned people think of the anecdotal pictures of the Victorian era, and not, as they should, of Raphael and Ingres.

In its proper sense an academic artist is one who adheres to the great classic schools of art, who accepts the Renaissance and maintains

its erudite traditions : he is the very opposite of the Pre-Raphaelite and of the Neo-Primitive, both of whom reject the Renaissance and all its works. It is as clear as possible that William Rothenstein does nothing of the kind. He is an artist of the temper of Leonardo da Vinci, and some of his drawings seem to me as precise, delicate, and beautiful. They can be compared in the Print Room of the British Museum—and there I leave it.

During the nineteenth century the academic tradition led to very different results on either side of the Channel. In England it descended into the abyss and degenerated into the pseudo-classicism of Leighton and Alma Tadema. In France there was Ingres.

Fortunately for himself and everybody else, William Rothenstein learnt his academism, not from Sir E. J. Poynter, but from a French artist who transfused into Young England the life-blood of Ingres. William Rothenstein—with the late William Strang, whose art was correspondingly intellectual and full of probity—is the most distinguished pupil Alphonse Legros had at the Slade, the pupil who in his subsequent career has most unswervingly followed the discipline of his teacher.

Discipline? Yes, that is a salient feature in the work of Rothenstein which distinguishes it from the mass of undisciplined painting that is yearly thrown into the exhibition rooms. His work is not without feeling—far from it; but whether drawing or painting, we always feel that his emotion has not been allowed to wander about puffing and blowing, but has been sternly controlled and ordered to its allotted end by a keen and alert intellect. His art does not enfold us with sentiment as with a cloak; it pierces us with the cleanness of a sword.

I have heard other painters complain that Rothenstein is “so dogmatic” in his opinions. What else could anyone who knows his drawings expect? His drawings—and his paintings for that matter—are pre-eminently the work of a man who is sure, who knows exactly what he is going to do and how he is going to do it. An artist who has the happiness to feel “right” about his own work—and you can feel you are right even though your modesty and candour compel you to say you are not satisfied with everything you do—that man is not likely to be uncertain about anything else in the world.

82 SOME CONTEMPORARY ARTISTS

From the very first Rothenstein showed his distinction in drawing as a medium and in portraiture as a subject. Born at Bradford in 1872, he came to London in 1888, and after working at the Slade under Legros, he went to Paris, which was the first city in which he exhibited. He was a fully-fledged artist in the early 'nineties, and that the essentials of his art have never changed since we may easily ascertain by comparing any of his later drawings with the set of *Oxford Characters*, published in 1896, which first brought him into general notice.

His friend Mr Max Beerbohm, in *Seven Men*, gives so spirited a portrait of William Rothenstein in the 'nineties, that I cannot resist the temptation to quote the passage :—

“ In the Summer Term of '93 a bolt from the blue flashed down on Oxford. It drove deep, it hurtlingly embedded itself in the soil. Dons and undergraduates stood around, rather pale, discussing nothing but it. Whence came it, this meteorite? From Paris. Its name? Will Rothenstein. Its aim? To do a series of twenty-four portraits in lithograph. These were to be published from the Bodley Head, London. The matter was urgent. Already

the Warden of A, and the Master of B, and the Regius Professor of C, had meekly 'sat.' Dignified and doddering old men, who had never consented to sit to anyone, could not withstand this dynamic little stranger. He did not sue: he invited; he did not invite: he commanded. He was twenty-one years old. He wore spectacles that flashed more than any other pair ever seen. He was a wit. He was brimful of ideas. He knew Whistler. He knew Edmond de Goncourt. He knew everyone in Paris. He knew them all by heart. He was Paris in Oxford."

This set of Oxford lithographs—which included, by the way, a drawing of Mr Max Beerbohm as an undergraduate—was followed in 1898 by a set of "English Portraits," and in the following year by a series of "Manchester Portraits." Indeed, throughout his career Mr Rothenstein has produced lithographs as well as paintings and drawings, and one is tempted to believe that even if some catastrophe wiped the two last out of existence, the lithographs alone would be enough to perpetuate the fame of William Rothenstein. He has graved portraits on stone of all the most celebrated men of his day, and

84 SOME CONTEMPORARY ARTISTS

as he has given the medium worthy subjects, so by the perfection of his execution he has done much to win respect for this once neglected form of art.

Lithography, it has been said, is the youngest of the pictorial arts, and perhaps because of its youth it has not always been regarded with that reverence which the world more easily accords to the aged. To the man-in-the-street "litho" is a word that suggests a gaily coloured advertisement; and even now there are people who cherish a belief that lithography is a mere abbreviation for chromo-lithography, a process which bears about as much relation to the lithographer's art as tracing does to drawing.

There is nothing mechanical about lithography as practised by a master, by a Daumier, a Whistler, or a Rothenstein; on the contrary it has all the autographic qualities of an etching—all and perhaps more. An artist can work on the stone, as he works on the copper plate; and if the first state of stone or plate be left unaltered, still the effect may be varied by the manner in which the proof is printed. This never wholly absent element of uncertainty as to how a print is coming out

gives to etchings, lithographs, and woodcuts an individuality, unafforded by any purely mechanical means of reproduction, which is highly esteemed and regarded as precious by art-collectors. Nevertheless, if this element of uncertainty exists, it is not—or should not be—in the mind of the artist, who ought to know exactly what he wants his printed proofs to be. The masterpieces of lithography are not the result of a lucky accident but the reward of patient and skilful labour.

In Whistler's hands the lithograph became more tender than an etching, softer than a charcoal study, more ethereal than a pencil drawing. Many of Mr Rothenstein's lithographs also have this charm of surpassing delicacy, but in his remarkable series of portraits he has proved again and again that the lithograph is capable of force as well as of delicacy. This union of delicacy with strength is the pivot around which Mr Rothenstein's art revolves, and though we may find it in his paintings, it is nowhere more clearly and beautifully apparent than in his lithographs.

There is one point, however, in which it may be said that Rothenstein is not altogether

orthodox. He has looked at the colour of the French impressionists and has seen that it is good. This is betrayed in his landscape paintings, which, while retaining their classic design and Leonardesque probity of draughtsmanship, yet enchant us by the prismatic glitter of their colour. He has not, like Mr Wilson Steer, made excursions to Manet and Renoir and then returned home to Constable and Turner, he has simply put impressionist colour into his landscapes and kept it there. He has kept it there because it is the truth, and Rothenstein is a very upright painter. If you wish to paint the sunlight in nature and to paint it truly with all its polychromatic sparkle, you must approximate to the formula of the luminists. There is no other way. You may by other means render something of the *still* beauty of sunshine, but you cannot give the sparkle.

In his landscapes, then, especially in the many beautiful aspects of the Cotswold country he has painted, Will Rothenstein can claim kinship with Lucien Pissarro in his searching and harmonising of colour in light and shadow. Coast scenes also he has painted, in which the "white cliffs of Albion"

are shown reflecting a thousand changing hues in the summer sunlight ; but this luminist aspect of his art is practically confined to his landscape work. In his figure paintings he is really nearer to Rubens than to Renoir.

Jewish himself by descent, William Rothenstein has painted many pictures of his co-religionists, and the picturesque ritual of the Synagogue has been a theme which he has exploited with conspicuous success. His oil-painting at the Tate Gallery, *Jews Mourning in a Synagogue*, and his well-known painting of three rabbis, *Reading the Law*, are typical examples of his power in these subjects to combine a decorative interest with grave religious feeling. While the painter has been able to find in the ceremonial robes worn by these figures rich opportunities for exercising his sense of colour and design, the expression on their faces reveals the penetration and reverence of his psychological insight.

That Rothenstein has a keen sense of character has been made obvious by a long series of portraits, and the touch of austerity in his art leads him to seek sitters among the most intellectual men of the day rather than among women of society. Yet while the

gravity of sages and serious subjects make a particular appeal to him, he has not ignored other aspects of life. He has painted several portraits of children, notably a group of his own family in fancy dress, entitled *The Princess Badroulbador*, in which the perennial charm of youth is tenderly and beautifully expressed.

Personally I am inclined to think that the most haunting picture Will Rothenstein has yet painted is a comparatively early work, *The Doll's House*, which must have been shown at the New English Art Club something like fifteen or sixteen years ago. These two figures of the man and the woman standing at the foot of the bare staircase impress themselves indelibly on the memory: the design is arresting, the colour quiet and restrained, but in all the quiet there is a sense of impending drama which seems the quintessence of Ibsenism.

Since this picture was painted Rothenstein has done many things. He has painted and drawn in England, in India, in France, and Flanders; he has written a *Life of Goya*; he has lectured as Professor of Civic Art at Sheffield University, an appointment he received in 1917; he was made Principal of the

Royal College of Art at South Kensington in 1920 ; and he has shown one of his numerous portraits of himself at the Royal Academy (1922). But though his activities have been many and various, I doubt if he has ever expressed himself more fully and completely than he did in *The Doll's House*. Herein we find all the essential Rothenstein ; and though it is far from being a "literary picture," yet the fact that it was inspired by Ibsen—and is still the best Ibsen picture that has been painted—is not only characteristic of the eighteen-nineties in which the artist began to make his name, but is also symptomatic of Rothenstein really being, what I have already said and will say again, an academic artist.

In his monograph on Goya he writes :—
"For, however many reasons men may give for the admiration of masterpieces, it is in reality the probity and intensity with which the master has carried out his work, by which they are dominated ; and it is his method of overcoming difficulties, not of evading them, which gives style, breadth, and becoming mystery to his execution. And this quality of intensity, whether it be the result of curiosity for form, or of a profound imagina-

90 SOME CONTEMPORARY ARTISTS

tion for nature, which lives, as it were, upon the surface of a drawing, or of a picture, is the best test we have for what we may consider as art."

There we have his confession, a confession by the way in which he characteristically places drawing first, and the picture—which in all academic work is founded on careful drawing—afterwards: and these qualities to which he gives his unbounded admiration, probity and intensity, are exactly the salient qualities which we find throughout the work of William Rothenstein, academic artist and Realist.

WILLIAM ORPEN

VII

WILLIAM ORPEN

AT the beginning of the century there used to be a great annual exhibition during the summer at South Kensington, consisting of works sent in by students at Schools of Art all over the country for the National Competition. Prizes and medals were awarded, and usually the opinions of the judges and the critics were at variance ; medallists and prize-winners were habitually voted to be dull and uninteresting by independent if unorthodox observers. Indeed, these displays, as regards the Fine Art exhibits, were not very exciting affairs, and I believe hardly anybody, except an art-master or two, regrets their discontinuance. But one year, I remember, in my very early days as a professional critic, there was a strange and unprecedented unanimity about a prize-winner. The gold medal for a drawing from life had been awarded to a young Irishman from the

94 SOME CONTEMPORARY ARTISTS

Dublin School of Art. His name was William Orpen. Everybody was talking about this drawing, for while it satisfied the academic mind by its flawless perfection and anatomical correctness, yet it roused the unorthodox to enthusiasm because it was not a dead thing—as so many prize-drawings are—but a figure in which every line pulsed with life.

Now and again in the history of painting there are happy artists who seem to escape the student-stage altogether and appear as masters from the first. Sir Thomas Lawrence was one, Sir John Everett Millais was a second, William Orpen is a third, and he bids fair to go further than either of the other two. Artists of this calibre may or may not become great masters, but the thing that distinguishes them is that from their first appearance there is nothing tentative in their work. It is assured and certain even in their childhood. They are obviously gifted by nature with an extraordinary facility and fluency, which they may misuse and degrade or cherish and cultivate. Whatever they do with it, the talent is there.

There never has been any argument about

Orpen. When he left Ireland and came to the Slade School in London his miraculous facility and fluency were at once recognised. In the exhibitions of the New English Art Club, held at the old Dudley Gallery during the first decade of the twentieth century, Orpen seemed to take place with his seniors at his first step: he a youth of twenty-five or so, fresh from the student class, was not ranked with other students but with the teachers. His contributions were soon recognised to be as important as those sent by Tonks or Wilson Steer. He had no long apprenticeship to serve before attracting attention. He got it immediately; and what separated him from other clever draughtsmen of his age was the fact that he never seemed to have experienced any difficulty in the manipulation of paint. It was not a question of making a reputation with his drawings and then slowly learning how to handle pigment; the first paintings he exhibited proved that he had a mastery of the brush.

I remember a very early still-life painting which was bought by the late Mr Staats Forbes. It was a *tour-de-force* in the technique

of its painting, and showed extraordinary brilliance in the observation and rendering of textures. Nothing could exceed the glazing of the glazed porcelain, the featheriness of the peacock's feather, the woodenness of the wood, and the polish of the furniture polish. It was all amazingly actual and brilliant, and the reflections on the shining surface of the table were as vivid and intense as the things themselves.

I remember other things, a recumbent nude splendidly drawn and brilliantly painted ; portraits,—among them that one of his wife known as *The Red Scarf* which is now in the Leeds Art Gallery ; and delightful little interiors with figures in them,—paintings which seemed to have the fullness of content of a Van Eyck but painted with the exuberance of a Hals.

The later paintings of Orpen are different, I admit—though now and again the difference is not so deep after all ; and I doubt if anybody could say they are better painted than his early pictures. Naturally, the man has matured with life and experience, and this maturity and added knowledge is expressed in the best of his later pictures. I think the

earlier portraits did not probe so deeply into character, but they did not show less accomplishment in painting than the later. Moreover, even the characterisation was keen in several early works, notably in the portrait of *Charles Wertheimer*, which, I believe, was the only Orpen ever exhibited at the Academy before the election of the painter as an Associate in 1910.

Five years before that, Orpen had an assured position as a portrait painter, and the knowing ones had already set him up as *the* rival to Sargent. It was common talk, in 1905 or thereabouts, that Charles Wertheimer "backed" Orpen, while Asher Wertheimer plunged on Sargent; and many people thought Charles the shrewder judge of the two brothers, each eminent among the art-experts of their time.

Orpen never lacked "backers," and among his own compatriots he had an enthusiastic admirer who was probably a finer judge of painting than either of the Wertheimers. It was Sir Hugh Lane who in the nineteen-noughts took me into a studio in Dublin where Orpen was then working and painting some of the portraits which now hang in the Dublin

98 SOME CONTEMPORARY ARTISTS

Municipal Art Gallery. It was at Hugh Lane's house in Chelsea that Orpen painted some of his happiest portrait-groups and immortalised a circle that will surely live in history.

Always a good Irishman, Orpen has not only painted the portraits of many of his compatriots but painted many Irish scenes. Of these, some like *In the Wicklow Mountains*, were based on scenes of vagrant and peasant life which he had witnessed; others, like *Sowing the Seed*, were playful allegories the inner meaning of which might not always be clear to those ignorant of the intricacies of the Irish situation at the moment, but the pictorial and decorative charm was never in doubt.

Landscapes he has painted, though in these he has never become a specialist; still-life subjects he has frequently painted with all brilliancy; himself he has painted again and again, with unfailing virtuosity and humour—for Orpen has a very keen sense of humour, though he but rarely allows it to flow into his pictures. Indeed, hitherto Orpen has been able to do brilliantly all that he wanted to, with one exception; and perhaps where I think he was not successful, he was not

attempting to express what I conceive should have been his aim. Orpen is the most brilliant of our portrait painters; he paints heads and figures to perfection; but the one thing he could not do, was to paint War. As an Official Artist at the Front he missed its reality and horror in his fascination with its aspect as a spectacle. He could paint individual soldiers and officers, but he never got behind the superficiality of appearances in his war-pictures, and about them there is a certain artificiality.

His painting, *The Warwicks Entering Peronne: March 1917*, affected us as something seen on a stage. It was "magnificently produced"; but it was not war. It conveyed no sense of the elation of conquest or the wild joy of triumph. To be so detached a spectator of modern warfare verged on the inhuman. His *Falling Bomb*, though a subject that even a civilian could appreciate, had such a far-away, old-masterly air that it was more like an illustration of the Apocrypha than a transcript of war in 1917.

So with his war landscapes. *The Great Mine, La Boisselle*, might be an Alpine scene. It does not contain the faint echo of an explosive. It

100 SOME CONTEMPORARY ARTISTS

does not suggest the desolation of Nevinson's *Deserted Trench*, nor the misery of the tormented earth which Paul Nash showed us in *Inverness Copse, Sunrise*. I am not saying these and other war-pictures by Orpen are bad pictures: I merely say they fail to be profoundly significant of war.

But when Orpen looks in the mirror and sees himself *Ready to Start*, sees the siphons and whisky-bottle he is leaving behind him, when he paints these things he says everything there is to say: in so doing he tacitly confesses it is the appearance of things that absorbs his pictorial attention, and with their significance, with what they really are, he is not greatly concerned. Like Rembrandt, Orpen can always take an immense delight in painting himself in any sort of "get up." In the tremendous fun of painting himself as a tin-hatted, khaki-clad "Old Bill," he happily forgot all about the ghastliness of war.

If Orpen couldn't paint war, he could paint peace, and he came into his own with the Peace Conference. His two great pictures at the Academy of 1920, *Signing of Peace in the Hall of Mirrors, Versailles*, and *A Peace Con-*

ference at the Quai d'Orsay, were simply an expansion of the delightful little interiors with figures which he had often sent ten or more years ago to the New English Art Club. Who has forgotten *The Hon. Percy Wyndham* and his room? The Academy pictures were—and I suppose always will be—more interesting to the general public because in these each of the little figures was a personage in international politics. But Orpen was in no wise overweighted by their celebrity. He painted Dr Wilson, Clemenceau, Lloyd George, and the rest in the same gay, quizzing spirit in which formerly he had painted his friends Hugh Lane, George Moore, Wilson Steer, Tonks, and MacColl. He particularised them and he characterised them admirably, but he subordinated them to the requirements of the picture as a whole. In neither work did he for one moment forget to view the scene steadily as a whole, so that there was no clashing of interest in the figures, no competition to catch the spectator's eye: each part was given its due proportion in relation to the whole and, whether diplomat or architectural detail, painted with equal vigour and zest.

102 SOME CONTEMPORARY ARTISTS

On the inequality of his separate portraits of the peace-makers there has been much comment. Some were very good, some were really bad—for Orpen—and some were intensely amusing, pushed to the verge of caricature. Lloyd George nearly always seemed to appeal to that whimsical Celtic sense of humour which is constantly, and so delightfully, bubbling forth in Orpen. Here let me add in passing that this rich vein of humour and his tremendous satiric power as a draughtsman are fully appreciated only by those who have had the luck to see the drawings Orpen has done “for private circulation only.” When these drawings, in letters to friends and on scraps hugged by his intimates, when these get on the market, then, great as it may be, Orpen’s reputation will make a fresh leap forward.

But to return to the “eminent”—no painter so prolific as Orpen can be expected to be always at his best. Consider how disappointing are some of Hals’ portraits. In the fearsome array of politicians and general officers he painted, there were inevitably many in whom he was little interested, some whom he positively disliked. Orpen is a

singularly detached painter and a most independent spirit ; he can paint to order, but he will not feel to order, and on his canvas he states plainly the state of his feelings. His best portraits are of people he likes and respects ; his next best are of the people he dislikes, and these are the ones that often make us roar with laughter ; but when Orpen is merely bored, he is unable to conceal it, unconsciously his energies slacken, and then, of course, we also are bored.

It was characteristic of Orpen's independence and aloofness that of all the hundreds of portraits he painted in Paris during the Conference and after, the very best of them all was not one of the famous men who sat to him but of a man who, till painted by Orpen, was a nonentity. The now famous *Chef de l'Hotel Chatham* was the " picture of the year " at the 1921 Academy, and not only a nine-days' wonder but a painting for all time. Here we had Orpen at his very best, using all his amazing facility and dexterity in the handling of paint for the sole purpose of putting a living being on his canvas. What a shrewd, genial, fascinating fellow is this cook in his immaculate white cap and jacket. We

have been told that he cooked chops amazingly well, but I can't believe Orpen painted him merely in gratitude for their succulency. Why did Mr Chester appeal so irresistibly to Orpen? I will hazard a guess; it was because of his rich, full humanity, because he was "a very man"—as many of the politicians and great persons, let me whisper, never were nor will be. That is why so many of the world's greatest portraits are of "Persons Unknown." That is why this Orpen portrait, though the style of painting be as old as Hals or Moroni, is yet of the twentieth century. Humanity is always new.

To become a national institution has its penalties as well as its advantages. Sir William Orpen has climbed to that pinnacle of establishment where people are apt to say, as they have said of *Punch* for a century, that he is "not so good as he was." I don't believe it. His two blonde nudes at the last New English (June 1922), *Early Morning* and *A Disappointing Letter*, were paintings as beautiful as he has ever done. With models that would have delighted Boucher or Fragonard, Orpen not only recaptured the grace of these great French decorators and

strengthened it with his own virility, but displayed, as only one who knew the impressionists could do, exquisite and subtle powers in rendering shimmering morning light falling on flesh and bed-clothes. Both pictures were painted with infinite gusto, and had the joyousness of an existence that is all *couleur de rose*.

Five years before he was elected A.R.A. in 1910, the late Robert Ross predicted that William Orpen would live to be President of the Royal Academy. Many people smiled at the time, but the prophecy is not far from fulfilment to-day, and nobody would be surprised now to see Sir William Orpen, R.A., K.C.B., treading in the footsteps of his compatriot Sir Martin Archer Shee, P.R.A.

AUGUSTUS JOHN

VIII

AUGUSTUS JOHN

NO artist since Whistler has been so great a figure in London life as Augustus John. His piquant personality and the dominating force of his artistic gifts have combined to make him the sort of hero around whom legends grow apace. He appeared in his early days to be the ideal Bohemian, the very anti-thesis of the Philistine, and all his actions as well as his art have been the subject of incessant comment. What John had done, what John was doing, has been for the last twenty years not only the talk of Chelsea but a favourite topic of conversation among all Englishmen who take an interest in art outside the Royal Academy.

Making his appearance in the New English Art Club about the same time as William Orpen, there was as much argument about John as there was little about Orpen. The one thing that everybody had to admit from

the first was that John could draw. He was reputed to be the finest draughtsman the Slade School had ever had, and few were inclined to dispute the assertion in the face of the wonderful drawings which he sent to the Dudley Gallery during the first decade of this century. The exuberant flow of his line, his powerful modelling of form by subtleties of light and shade, the extraordinary vitality of these heads in chalks and sanguine, all these qualities seemed to suggest that in John was reincarnated the princely art of Rubens. There was no doubt about it, John *could* draw; but after that all was controversial, and the very fury of the controversy was a tribute to his talent. *On ne discute que ce qui est fort.*

Admitting that John could draw, it was said that he was wilful, that he was perverse. People asked plaintively, why, oh why, did he draw such "ugly people"? Had he no sense of beauty? The truth was, of course, that John, having an exceedingly original mind, found new beauties in new types; and the gist of the matter was very happily expressed in a cartoon by Mr Max Beerbohm in which he showed Mr George Moore musing before a

row of John's gipsy-like women and telling himself how strange it was to think that in twenty years' time he would be "in love with these ladies."

A Welshman by birth and descent, John was happily free from the Englishman's worship of respectability. Time and the favours of London have domesticated him to some extent, but in his early days he was a Borrow in paint, and he was happiest and most at home among the Romanies. Round about 1904, when he was supposed to be teaching painting at the Liverpool University School of Art, he would mysteriously disappear. Word would go round that John had gone roving with the gipsies, and one day he would reappear bringing with him little pictures of the raggle-tagged life of the Caravan, which were absolutely a new thing in painting. They were bright and clear in colour, incisive in line, and always effective in composition. Indeed, among those who knew, his design was as unquestionably able as his draughtsmanship, and a composition study of a scene on the Brocken, executed in his student days at the Slade, still exists as a precious early relic of his powers in this direction.

Unable to assault his draughtsmanship, those whom John offended, by his subjects really more than by his style, sought opportunity for disparagement by saying that if he could draw he couldn't paint. It is true that John never showed the same precocious facility in manipulating paint that Orpen had : he attracted attention first by his drawings, and more slowly acquired mastery with the paint-brush ; but though his ability as a colourist has increased in later years, his powers of painting were perfectly obvious between 1903 and 1905. In one of these years he exhibited a number of gipsy portraits at the New English Art Club, which made a profound impression on all who saw them. We might like them or dislike them ; but it was impossible to ignore them. No sooner did we enter the Dudley Gallery than these bold faces arrested attention imperiously, almost insolently ; and while many other things more conventionally beautiful could be found in the same exhibition, the roving eye was drawn irresistibly, even against its will, back to these arresting character studies.

It was said at the time that John had the defect of his virtues, that his modelling was

over-modelling; that his search for character was pushed to such lengths that it verged on caricature; that he committed "errors in proportion," and so and so forth. Even had these strictures been justified, they would not have sufficed to empty the paintings of merit. The greatest painters have their little weaknesses and are the more human by reason of their faults. Correggio was incorrect in his proportions, and, as Sir Joshua Reynolds told us, "even the divine Raphael might have finished his picture as highly and correctly as was his custom, without heaviness of manner." The palace of art has many mansions and it is impossible for a painter to occupy every room at the same time.

As a matter of fact, however, many of the criticisms passed on John's work were foolish and unjust. These oil-paintings were not "crude in colour," nor were they "unpleasant in surface": on the contrary, they showed a distinct advance on his previous oil-paintings in skill of handling and harmony of colour. As for exaggerations, it is possible that John, in searching out intently each particular feature, was sometimes not as careful as he should have been in correlating each to each.

Fascinated by one particular feature, he was inclined now and then to emphasise it unduly by modelling it in stronger relief than the other features. I remember one *Portrait of an Old Man* in which it seemed to me the nose had been so emphasised. It might have been painted with more restraint without sacrificing that intense characterisation and abundant vitality which hall-marked these portraits. But, after all, discreet exaggeration is just what gives point and significance to a portrait, and it was very like cavilling to pick out an overstatement here and there in the work of a man who showed his sureness of hand and grasp of essentials again and again in the turn of a neck, the curve of an ear, and the setting of an eye.

In June 1921 one of the earliest paintings shown by John at the New English Art Club was again exhibited at the Goupil Gallery. It was *The Model*, a splendid example of his Rubens period, complete in its pulsating life and exhaustive rendering of rounded form, as few of John's paintings are to-day. It was interesting to compare this with the later work of the artist and to note the main changes in his style. These changes have been

brought about very largely by reason of the fact that John is not only a portrait painter but also a decorative artist. In painting large works intended to form mural decorations, such for example as *The Way Down to the Sea* and *The Mumpers*, John deliberately sacrificed roundness of form for decorative effect. Like Puvis de Chavannes, whose art certainly did not escape his attention, John found that the qualities he aimed at necessitated a certain flatness in his treatment. At the same time his colour in these decorative works tended to become lighter and brighter; for though John has never been an impressionist himself or used to any extent the division of tones (or "optical mixture"), yet, as one who knew and respected Lucien Pissarro, he knew all about the Frenchmen and was indirectly led by them to select his palette from the primitives rather than from the painters of the Post-Renaissance.

It has been said John's art illustrates a "natural reaction" from impressionism: it does so merely to the extent in which John, like Matisse, has tended to simplify rather than to complicate painting. During the last ten or twelve years he has certainly given

signs of being alive to the qualities in primitive art. This he has shown in his drawings as well as in his paintings. Some of his pencilled figures have been positively Egyptian in their monumental simplicity; and these pencilled drawings on their first appearance strangely bewildered those looking for the round robustness of a Rubens. On the other hand, in his etchings—and the greatness of John as an etcher is not yet fully realised—he has usually adhered to the impressionist method of building up form by broken lines of light and shade rather than by contours and outlines. His etchings descend from Rembrandt, if his decorations sometimes take us back to Ghirlandaio.

It is one of the bewildering things about John that in some works he seems to reject the Renaissance and all that it implies; in others he accepts it to the full. At least four centuries divide his cabinet-size and decorative paintings of Apostles, painted about 1913 but seeming to belong to the fresco days of Fra Angelico, from such a work as his full-length portrait of *William Nicholson*. It is clear that he is infinitely various, and yet the intense individuality

of his draughtsmanship unifies all his work and makes it recognisable as John and nothing but John. His landscapes belong rather to the class of his decorative work than to that of his realistic portraiture. Finding his favourite subjects among the mountains and lakes of his native Wales, John invented a new genre in landscape, one which has been extensively copied. Emphatic in their design, simplified in form and brilliant but still in colour, there was nothing like them before in English landscape. They have neither the gentleness of the South of England nor the rugged wildness of the North: they have the crystal clearness of the mountain air in Wales. At least in these limpid, lustred landscapes, it never rains.

Like Orpen, Augustus John also was occupied during the later stages of and after the war in executing portraits of notabilities, and the psychological depths of these and other later portraits differentiate them from his earlier works. John has always been a master of drawing, and his manipulation of pigment has steadily grown in accomplishment and distinction; but his power of expressing form and colour had never been used

so eloquently for the expression of character as in some of the portraits which formed part of his great one-man show at the Alpine Club Gallery in March 1920. His views of his sitters did not always accord with the popular estimate of their character; he took his own course; and if we were given to the full the pugnacity that we expected to find in *Lord Fisher*, we were on the other hand surprised at the serenity of *The Rt. Hon. William Hughes*, in whom John found nothing of the aggressive self-assertion which others had read into the Australian Prime Minister's speeches.

Reviewing the portraits of women in this exhibition, one could not help noting the absence of those gipsy types which John formerly treated with so much sympathy, knowledge, and respect. Doubt arose whether the artist found the portrayal of women in society equally congenial. The sincerity of his art and the intelligence that directs it could not permit him to paint human butterflies without leaving a trace on the canvas of good-humoured contempt, and if we were to judge him solely by portraits of the type of *La Veilleuse*, we might have grounds for believing

John's opinion of the sex to be not far removed from that held by Lavedan's Marquis de Priola. Fortunately, however, there were exceptions. His magnificent *Lady Michelham* was a noble rendering of a gracious personality. But few of these later portraits of women attained the same high seriousness which distinguished such male portraits as the two majestic paintings of the Emir Feisul and the intensely lovable rendering of Colonel T. E. Lawrence. John did more here than present with consummate skill the external aspects of his sitters ; he penetrated beneath the surface and by the wizardry of his brush nobly expressed the statuesque dignity of the Arab Prince, and the intrepid gentleness of the English scholar.

After expressing in no unmeasured terms what he thought about the Royal Academy, Augustus John was in 1921 elected an Associate, and he was represented for the first time at Burlington House in 1922. But if he had roared loudly without, the lion made his entrance with the gentleness of a dove. His half-length of a lady with a black mantilla, *Mrs Valentine Fleming*, was gentleness itself, gentle and sympathetic towards

the sitter, gentle in its lightness of handling and careless elegance. There was only just a hint of the ex-rebel and Bohemian in the jaunty truculence of the Bernard Shaw portrait in the last room. People who went to the Academy to be shocked came away strangely disappointed. But there is no need to despair. The whole of John has not yet been seen at the Academy, and if he is still the great hope of British art, it is because he is not only a portrait painter but an artist who has been, and we hope still is, capable of executing mighty mural decorations.

GILMAN AND GORE

IX

GILMAN AND GORE

I BRACKET these two artists together, not because their work is similar, but firstly because they were close friends and co-workers from the time of their student days at the Slade School, and secondly because neither of them, unfortunately, is now alive. I include them in this book because each died at a comparatively early age, so that they properly belong to the generation with which I am mainly concerned, and also because their paintings were, and still are, the most precious fruits which our native soil has yet produced from the grafting of the Frenchman Pissarro with the Dane-descended Sickert.

Although students at the Slade, both Gore and Gilman—I give their names chronologically—taught at the Westminster School of Art, and their works are perfect examples of what I believe may one day come to be called the “Westminster tradition.” That tradi-

tion, for the origin of which Walter Sickert is responsible, differs considerably from the tradition of the Slade. Westminster drawing is distinguished by its broken line as opposed to the sweeping contours of the Slade: in painting, the general practice at the Slade is the sweeping brush-stroke; at the Westminster the ideal was the exact and immediately arrested touch. To be irreverent, the first treated paint like butter, as something to be spread; the second treated it as the pieces of a mosaic, something to be fitted together. The distinction is clearly discernible. Look at a painting or drawing by Miss Sylvia Gosse and you see the Westminster tradition; look at one by Mr John Wheatley and you will recognise the Slade. Some think the Slade people are the better draughtsmen; but few can deny that the Westminster lot have the finer sense of colour. Whatever else they were, both Gilman and Gore were exquisite colourists.

The terribly sudden death in March 1914 of Spencer Frederick Gore was a sad blow to British art. The passing away of a veteran full of years and honours is not a tragedy, it is the inevitable lot of man; but it is difficult

to think without bitterness of the fate which snatches away a young artist in his prime, when he is entering into the full enjoyment of his powers, when the recognition—always tardy to approach genius—is at last beginning to come his way. Of the estimation in which he was held by his fellow-artists, one example may be given. When the Camden Town Group was formed in 1911, though Augustus John, Lucien Pissarro, and Walter Sickert were members, none of them but Spencer Gore was elected the first President. That position he fully deserved by the charm and distinction of his work, and he filled it admirably by the sweetness and justice of his character.

Gore was the most lovable man it has ever been my privilege to know—extraordinarily generous and broadminded in his appreciation of the work of other artists, modest and almost shy about his own. He was far too sincere ever to pretend to like work he thought poor or ineffective, but during a friendship of some years I never once heard him say a really unkind thing about a brother artist.

This sweetness of disposition, this readiness to make the best of everyone and everything,

which made the man so lovable, was always present in the work of the artist. Added to his delicate perception of colour, his fine sense of design, and the untiring freshness of his observation, it enabled him to find beauty in the commonplace and romance in the familiar.

There was a romantic tendency in Gore, and that is one of the things distinguishing his painting from that of Gilman. Though a good draughtsman and miraculously happy in catching and registering the movement of figures, Gore was never a typical Slade artist. He came too soon under the joint influence of Pissarro and Sickert: the influence of the first peeped out in his early landscapes, of the second in his early interiors and figure paintings. But at no time did his admiration for the work of these two painters lead him into direct imitation. His art was too personal. There is a painting by Gore of quite a Sickert subject, *The Green Petticoat*, a half-clad girl standing against the light of a window, but there is a fullness of range in the harmonious colour and a peculiar gentleness in the handling that mark it at once to an astute observer as the work of Gore, not Sickert. Of colour he

possessed even a wider range than Sickert, and his harmonies were inclined to be deeper and richer than those of Lucien Pissarro. If we may take an analogy from the piano, while Pissarro loved to explore the treble and Sickert the bass, Gore wove his most exquisite melodies out of the middle notes.

His romantic tendency showed itself in a long series of theatre subjects and ballet scenes, magical paintings dancing with colour and movement, in which—unlike almost every other recent painter of ballets—Gore appeared to be absolutely unconscious that Degas had treated similar themes. But what a difference there is in the treatment! Degas, giant as he was, viewed the ballet with blasé, cynical eyes; Gore saw it quivering with wonder and delight. Never shall I forget going with him to Covent Garden when he saw the Russian Ballet for the first time. At the fall of the curtain he turned to me, his eyes shining with moisture, and whispered: “I’ve often dreamt of such things—but I never thought I should see them!”

For all the truth and accuracy of his vision, Gore was something of a dreamer: he was an artist in whom the renaissance of wonder

dwelt continually. In his art the romanticist and impressionist movements mingled and fused completely, so that in his pictures we find an enchanting wistfulness which no other impressionist painter gives, and with it a prismatic gaiety of colour which was quite beyond the reach of the men of 1830. With this temperament and with technical gifts to match, Gore could find romantic beauty in the most surprising places, in *The Villa Residence* and in *The Railway Station, Letchworth*. Seen from his poetic outlook and interpreted by the magic of his brush or pastel-stick, red-brick suburban houses were transfigured, the streets of Camden Town were flushed with loveliness, and music-halls were metamorphosed into visions of paradisiac refinement. Towards the end of his life, as he also felt the influence of Cézanne, his sense of form developed and became more powerful. There was tremendous force in the paintings of Richmond Park which occupied his last winter; his colour deepened and became more sonorous, the weight of the tree trunks was expressed with monumental vigour. It was painting out at Richmond in all weathers that brought on the pneumonia which killed him

in a week. Yet short as his life proved to be, it was long enough to give him a distinct and lasting place in British Art.

It is difficult for me to write critically about an artist I knew so well as Harold Gilman. When I first met him at Sickert's rooms in Fitzroy Street—it must have been about 1906 or 1907—I thought him the most serious-minded painter I had ever met. In truth, there was a good deal of the nonconformist conscience in Gilman, though his father was a staunch Church of England parson. When I call Harold Gilman a nonconformist, I refer, of course, to his art opinions and not to his religion. In his principles of painting he was rigid and unbending. His views were always remarkable for their depth rather than their breadth, and there was no convenient elasticity about his theory or his practice. There was one right way of painting and many wrong ways, and all an honest man could do was to paint in the one right way, whether the public liked it or not. Gilman would never compromise, never make any concession to expediency; and the result of his unmitigated sincerity was a hard struggle for many years, with success in sight only just before the end.

To Gilman the only right way of painting was to build up a picture like a mosaic ; to analyse the colour of the scene before you, and then to lay on the right pigment, touch by touch, patch by patch, as the mosaic worker puts in his pieces of stone. Often when he came to see me he would gaze admiringly at a piece of old tapestry, a needle-picture, and again and again I have heard him say, after looking at it, " Yes, that is how one ought to paint."

The prevailing fashion some years ago of putting a heavy outline round the contours of figures and other objects annoyed him exceedingly. The line did not exist in nature, colours melted into one another, and to put a line between them was untrue, therefore to be condemned. To signalise his abhorrence of this practice, Gilman once exhibited a portrait of his mother at the Allied Artists with the title, *Thou shalt not put a Blue Line round thy Mother*. Notwithstanding his seriousness, he had a keen sense of humour, and could enjoy a joke as well as anyone.

There was nothing he disliked more than being labelled, and though much influenced by impressionist theories and practice, he

would never call himself an impressionist. Gore at one time admitted he was a Neo-Impressionist, though the label did not fit him exactly; but Gilman, if he must be something, preferred to regard himself as a Neo-Realist. Classicism was mawkish plagiarism, Romanticism was humbug and falsehood, Realism was the Truth as well as one could see it. All honest painters were realists. Gilman firmly believed that, however much the Masters might vary in their style, in their subjects, and in their colour schemes, only one method of painting had been used throughout the ages by the Great Ones. All that he saw confirmed his conviction in this respect, and he found no difficulty in reconciling the art of Velasquez with that of Cézanne and Van Gogh, for he held that they were in agreement on all essentials. Gauguin was another matter: he put a blue line round his mother.

His modernity expressed itself in his uncompromising statement of colour. He detested "neutral tints," and would have nothing doubtful or uncertain in his paintings. Shadows were his great battle-ground, for he would never shirk the issue by filling them up with an undecided grey. Gilman knew very

132 SOME CONTEMPORARY ARTISTS

well that there was no such thing in nature as a colourless grey—that a grey must always be greenish or bluish or purplish or yellowish, that it must have a tint belonging to one of the colours of the rainbow. Which tint it might be, and what its degree of luminosity, that the painter must find out before he was fit to begin his job. There was a period during which his whole-hearted honesty made Gilman fasten on the colour lurking in shadows with ferocity, and once found, he would state it fearlessly for what it was, overstating rather than understating it, as if to say, for example, “It isn’t grey, it’s green, *green*, GREEN ; and I’ll damn well show them that it’s green.” It is really impossible to express the colour-emphasis of Gilman on these occasions without swearing.

I am not prepared to deny that this furious search for and sledge-hammer statement of colour did not amount in some pictures to exaggeration ; but it was this search that eventually made Gilman one of the finest colourists of his time. His tremendous accentuation of the colour in shadows was liable to offend people whose perception of colour was less keen than that of the painter,

and it was only in later years, when the eyes of the public became better educated and more accustomed to bright schemes of colour, that the merit of his art began to be understood and appreciated. People would no longer be shocked by the force of colour in his portrait of *Mrs Robert Bevan*: they would see its brilliance, and now would realise its essential truth and the taste with which the vivid tints had been controlled and harmonised

Harold Gilman was born in 1876, and he died during the influenza epidemic in the New Year of 1919. His talent, though always considerable, only came slowly to maturity, and I believe nearly all his best work was done after 1911. He had been to Spain in 1904, and it took him some time to throw off the spell of Velasquez. For it was not from Velasquez that Gilman learnt to be a colourist; neither was it from Sickert, though Sickert put him on the road. To begin with, it was Spencer Gore, and, through Gore, Lucien Pissarro. Then when he became intimate with Ginner after 1910, he was led to take more and more interest in the work of the later impressionists, particularly Cézanne and Van

134 SOME CONTEMPORARY ARTISTS

Gogh, for whom at first he had nothing like Ginner's enthusiastic admiration. Ginner took him to Paris and taught him to reverence them. I know, for I was with them there, and the honesty in Cézanne soon appealed to the honesty in Gilman. Thereafter his colour, though never aping that of Cézanne or that of Van Gogh, grew steadily more exquisite, subtle, and refined.

Despite the joke about the G in their names—"hard in Gilman and soft in Ginner"—Gilman was the more malleable of the two. There is not one painting by Ginner that betrays the influence of Gilman; but there is a painting by Gilman which has traces of Ginner's influence. This is *Leeds Market*, a lovely thing painted in 1913. The subject, in which the great glass roof of the market is a prominent feature, is in the nature of a Ginner subject, and his influence peeps out rather in the delicate network of the design than in the exquisite shimmering colour which is sheer Gilman, and Gilman at his highest.

We cannot classify Gilman as a landscapist or portraitist. He was just a painter. Town or country, people or still-life, all was grist

that came to his mill : he painted everything and he painted it truly, beautifully, and well. Sometimes I think that more wonderful than anything else he did are the two portraits he painted of his landlady in Maple Street, *Mrs Mounter*. They have the reverent psychology of a Rembrandt with the colour of a Vermeer. These portraits are the apotheosis of the charwoman, the transfiguration of homeliness, age, and toil into a spiritual loveliness of colour that time cannot wither.

Yet I hesitate to say these are the best things the artist ever did, for short as his life was, he has left many visions of beauty to console us for his loss. There are all his landscapes to consider, and these are many and various. There are his drawings, too—figures, landscapes in which he used dots after the manner of Van Gogh, tree studies drawn with the intensity and vigour of a Theodore Rousseau. There is one magnificent drawing of a tree trunk which could be set beside a study by any master.

There is the great painting of *Halifax Harbour after the Explosion*, which he painted for the Canadian War Memorials shortly

136 SOME CONTEMPORARY ARTISTS

before his death—a radiant, stately landscape, which when shown at Burlington House eclipsed every other painting in the exhibition by the serene and stereoscopic beauty of its colour. Then there is a series of his Swedish paintings, among them the *Norwegian Waterfall*, in which Gilman outshone the brilliance of a Sargent in a painting which had a solidity, a subtlety of refinement, and an intimacy of truth which no Sargent landscape has ever possessed.

There are his paintings of Dieppe, so often like a Sickert in subject, but so different from a Sickert in colour ; and a whole series of wonderful sylvan studies, wooded landscapes, which occupied his last months as a painter. Then there are his interiors and his still-life paintings, pictures in which tea-pots and common cups and saucers become *objets d'art* by the preciousness of their colour, pictures in which the flaring wall-paper of a lodging-house is transformed into a sumptuous pattern of rich harmonies.

Yet in the end, while all these and many more linger in my memory, I return to the two portraits of *Mrs Mounter* ; for in these we get the whole of Gilman, the whole at his

deepest and richest, of the painter we valued and of the man we loved, of the great colourist with his magic of harmony, and of the great-hearted democrat with his tenderness and love for all humanity.

CHARLES GINNER

X

CHARLES GINNER

OF the Allied Artists' exhibitions in the Royal Albert Hall it can always be said that if they did nothing else they gave Charles Ginner his chance. To exhibit is the first necessity of the artist—unless he has private means and only paints as a hobby ; and when a painter has a strongly individual style, no friends in London, no connection with any known art school, and nothing to commend him but his talent, then, however decided that may be, it is no easy matter for him to get his work accepted by the selecting jury of a West-End exhibition. This phenomenon is not peculiar to London : it exists in all cities where art exhibitions are held ; and that is why the *Salon des Indépendants* was founded in Paris. The Allied Artists' exhibitions were conducted on the same principles : there was no selecting jury, anybody could join, and by paying a small subscription have

142 SOME CONTEMPORARY ARTISTS

the right to show what pictures he or she pleased.

Accordingly Ginner, who knew all about the *Indépendants*, joined the Allied Artists as soon as it was started, and sent three paintings to the first Albert Hall exhibition in 1908. He knew all about the *Indépendants* because he was then living in Paris. The son of an English physician practising in the Riviera, Charles Ginner was born at Cannes in 1879, was brought up in France, and at the age of twenty was sent to Paris to study architecture. However, he soon decided he would rather be a painter than an architect, and began to study painting under the Spaniard Anglada y Camarasa. Anglada was a very fine colourist and a powerful draughtsman, but I cannot find any trace whatever of his influence in Ginner's art, unless it be that he got from him his liking for a rich, thick impasto of luscious pigment. Anglada was never mean with his colours : neither is Ginner.

His position in the first decade was one singularly unfortunate for a professional painter. He was an Englishman in Paris—in the pre-Entente days of Fashoda—and he was a “foreigner” in London. He didn't

know one Academician, and he had no connection with the Slade or Westminster. In those days, he has told me since, there was one man who believed in him at Paris, one man who bought two or three of his pictures each year, and so formed gradually a "Collection Ginner." But he could not even get a showing in London till he was near thirty, and then he made his debut with some eight hundred other exhibitors at the Royal Albert Hall.

Few people took much notice of his work when it was first shown here in 1908, but several artists were literally attracted by his lavish use of pigment, and, the canvas being still wet, took away samples of his paint in their finger-nails. Some few, however, approached his work with more respect, and I well remember Spencer Gore coming up to me before the Ginners and saying with conviction, "This man is a painter."

Two years later Gore and Ginner met, and this is how it came about. In those days all members of the Allied Artists were invited in turn to serve on the Hanging Committee. Invitations were sent out in alphabetical order. In 1910 it had got as far as G, and

among those who accepted the invitation were Gilman, Ginner, and Gore, Ginner coming over on purpose from Paris. At the first meeting of the Committee it was my privilege to introduce Ginner to the two ex-Slade students and to remind Gore that he liked Ginner's work at the first exhibition. These were the two first English painters with whom Ginner became acquainted, and the acquaintance ripened into a close and intimate friendship which only ceased when Gore and Gilman died.

That is how Charles Ginner came to London. Through Gore and Gilman he naturally got to know Walter Sickert and his Fitzroy Street circle. When the Camden Town Group—afterwards the London Group—grew out of the Allied Artists, Ginner was in it, and was thus launched within a closed and selected exhibition. Since then his progress has been steady and sure; he has been elected a member of the Friday Club and of the New English Art Club; he has been welcomed at the Goupil and Leicester Galleries; his work has been bought by the Contemporary Art Society for the nation, and his paintings now are not only a feature of any exhibition in

which they appear but are beginning to influence other artists also.

I have hinted that Ginner has a strongly individual style, and it may pertinently be inquired how does he display this individuality and what are the characteristics of his art? This question may be answered partly by asking another. Of how many living artists can it truly be said that their paintings do not remind us, more or less, of pictures we have already seen? Few indeed have the real gift of individuality, and those who have it are thereby at once raised to a position of distinction among their contemporaries.

Now, when we take our stand in the midst of a collection of his paintings or drawings, our first impression is that Charles Ginner unquestionably belongs to this goodly company. Among the work of his contemporaries there is nothing like a Ginner, unless it be a deliberate imitation—some are beginning to appear nowadays, just as there are imitation Steers and imitation Sargents. Nor can we derive Ginner's paintings and drawings from any one old master. We may find in his work qualities that remind us now of Crivelli, now

of Peter de Hoogh, now of Vincent Van Gogh ; but that is a very different thing from saying any painting by him is like Crivelli's *Annunciation*, or De Hoogh's *Courtyard*, or a landscape by Van Gogh. It is not. Whatever his subject may be, a rural landscape or an urban street-scene, the interior of a factory or the exterior of a timber-yard, Ginner's painting is like itself and nothing else except his subject ; the handling and treatment are markedly personal.

Mr Ginner stands apart from his contemporaries in that while being extremely modern he is modern without being extreme. He is an inflexible realist whose work is respected by cubists and exponents of abstract art, and we may surmise that the secret of this unwonted consensus of admiration is his incontestable excellence as a designer.

That is one of the first of his qualities. Every drawing and every painting he produces is elaborately constructed, and shows a real zeal and passion for construction. Perhaps it was a precocious delight in building things up which prompted his first choice of an architect's profession. However that may be, it is part and parcel of his instinctive

architectural bent which prompts Ginner to delight in searching out the little things which go to the making of the big. He delights in detail, not as William Hunt did for its own sake, but because it is something more where-with to enrich the construction of his design. Because it is the design, the whole design, and nothing but the design in which he is primarily engrossed, Ginner is not overwhelmed by detail as some of the lesser Pre-Raphaelites were. They allowed detail to become their master, but Ginner masters detail.

Few of his contemporaries share this delight in detail except those who express it in a pettifogging spirit inattentive to the major whole. Not one of his contemporaries surpasses Ginner in subordinating a wealth of detail to the unity of the whole scene. Nobody can give so much and pack it so neatly, tightly, and beautifully together. This peculiar joy in packing leads Ginner to hail with delight subjects on which ninety-nine out of a hundred artists would turn their backs. What an extraordinary monument of his patience and ability is that wonderful coloured drawing of *The Great Loom, Leeds University*, now in the possession of the Clothworkers Company.

Here was a mass of machinery which to the common eye appeared fit for nothing but a "mechanical" drawing. Ginner, to my knowledge, spent three weeks in getting it right in black-and-white before he began to apply colour, and through these days of painstaking labour his fervour never slackened, so that in the end he produced a little masterpiece, tightly packed with mechanical detail yet elastic in its spacious atmosphere, static in the rigidity of its design yet dynamic in the vibrating beauty of its quiet colour.

"If your subject be only a pig-sty, dignify it, my boy," said Old Crome to his son. Charles Ginner also belongs to that rare tribe of optimistic realists to whom nothing is common or unclean. If accident prompted him to paint a cess-pool, he would find in it an excuse for lovely colour and intricate design. A typical example of his powers in this direction is the painting entitled *A Corner of Leeds*, a fascinating composition built up out of the unpromising litter of sordid backyards in one of England's ugliest and dirtiest cities. But what tenderness and discrimination he expends on the painting of a single brick. The brick walls in Ginner's

pictures or drawings are always a delight. Peer into them and you will see that each brick has its own identity and colour, not one of them is a mere repetition of its fellow ; and yet this scrupulous segregation is done with so much care and knowledge, that when we stand back we see, not a collection of bricks, but a wall. One has to go back, long past the Pre-Raphaelites, to the seventeenth-century Dutchmen to find anything like this unaffected pleasure in bricks, tiles, and homely surroundings expressed with the same superb tact and refinement. Incidentally it was experienced by Carlo Crivelli, as we may see by his *Annunciation* in the National Gallery.

While closely packed detail in a clear-hewn design is a salient feature in Ginner's paintings, there are other qualities by the presence of which we may recognise his handiwork. There is the rich impasto of the pigment itself, piled lusciously on the canvas ; the love of bright, pure colour, whipped on with passionate zest, each stroke falling unerringly on the allotted place ; but all the time this colour-fury, for it is nothing less, is steadied and controlled by an exacting draughtsmanship that insists on the precise rendering of

150 SOME CONTEMPORARY ARTISTS

subordinated detail and by an iron sense of design that gives monumental stability to the scenes depicted.

There may be more subtle landscape painters, there may be cleverer architectural draughtsmen, there may be microscopic artists who can outpoint him in minuteness, but there is no one whose pictures have quite the same qualities that a "Ginner" possesses. There is nothing facile or "slick" in his painting—we may thank God on our knees for an artist who is not "clever"—he has no recipe, no trick that comes off: each "Ginner" is a triumph of slogging, persistent effort, and the ensuing mosaic of richly crusted pigment has the monumental stability of a work that endureth for ever.

If you have seen his *Colin Glen, Belfast*, you will have noted how the cascade of the waterfall is actually modelled in pigment, and this will have given you some idea of the painter's Homeric methods. In other paintings the method is less apparent, in the majority the art of concealing the art has been practised to perfection; but from nearly everything he has done one receives an impression of tremendous strength and substance. Yet this

vigorous and weighty expression of form is not incompatible with a delicate feeling for light and atmosphere. These last are the two qualities in which Mr Ginner has made great advances during recent years. He goes on adding strength to strength.

His City street-scene, *Cartling Lane*, was remarkable no less for its stereoscopic qualities, the way one could look right down it, than for the towering majesty of its composition. His large quayside scene, *Clarendon Dock, Belfast*, arrested us by its striking design and brilliant aerial colour as well as by the completeness with which every detail, from the cobbled foreground upwards, was realised, characterised, and yet subordinated.

His *Stonemasons*, again, a large painting of exquisite refinement, was notable for the delicacy of its aerial colour as well as for its truth of observation and dignity of structure. In colour this is one of the blondest pictures Ginner has yet painted; it has the treble harmonies of Ravel's *Fountains* or a Debussy prelude.

There is no monotony in Ginner's colour, which is as personal as his sense of design. His colour is full of variety because it is based

on the truths of nature, which are infinitely various. There is, and he shows us, all the difference in the world between the sunny serenity of the village street in *Gunwalloe* and the forbidding grandeur of the rocks of *Golden Gap*. The cliffs of Cornwall and the cliffs of Dorset have each their own glories and their own colour. Recognising this and discriminating between them, Ginner accepts their happy accidents of mass and colour, and encases them in a design to fit their character. He can find grandeur in the gloom of a city back-street, but he will not falsify its sombreness by painting it in bright colours ; when the sun plays on a white cliff or on the blocks of whitish stone in a mason's yard, then he is ready to discard the rich deep tones at the base of his palette for the light ethereal tints which befit nature at her zenith.

I believe Charles Ginner to be one of the most remarkable painters of our time. In his work are combined the excellences of many modern movements without any of their excesses or extravagances. In his paintings we may find the minute naturalism of the Pre-Raphaelites subordinated and controlled with the mastery of a Van Eyck ; the prismatic

glamour of the impressionists without any loss of the substance in the rapture of chasing the shadows ; a great deal of the colour-passion of Van Gogh but not a trace of his sometime wandering wildness ; the iron solidity and durability of the cubists without any betrayal of nature or distortion of human into geometrical forms. Charles Ginner has learnt from many schools ; but his knowledge is expressed with a calm sanity that befits the dignity of a Master.

J. D. FERGUSON

XI

J. D. FERGUSSON

JOHN DUNCAN FERGUSSON is the "dark horse" of British painting. He never exhibited extensively before the War, and since 1914 I doubt if half-a-dozen of his pictures have been shown publicly in London. Consequently very few people know what he is doing, for, like Rossetti in his later days, he only shows his things to those who take the trouble to search him out. Remembering what he has done in the past, his present seems worthy of attention, for he is almost the only British artist of his generation who ever succeeded in making a distinct reputation in Paris, where twelve years ago he was recognised as a *chef d'école*; and if he seems rather disposed to shut himself up like a hermit, yet before now hermits—after their death—have been canonised as saints in the calendar.

It is a curious fact that some of the Modern

Masters whose works are most sought after to-day by wealthy collectors—and only the wealthy now can afford to buy them—were going begging in the lifetime of their authors. Cézanne, Gauguin, Van Gogh—none of them ever obtained large prices for their works in their lifetime, and the paintings of the last were for a long time almost unsaleable. Understand, I am not courageous enough to declare positively that Fergusson is a Cézanne or a Van Gogh, though personally I find him a most fascinating and decorative painter; but I do wish to insist that in all probability the great master of the next generation after our own will be some artist who has never been “boomed,” but rather neglected, somebody whose name perhaps only a few will have heard. Merits and markets have been so far apart in recent years, that in buying modern art one is far more likely to be able to get a masterpiece for five pounds than for five hundred. It was certainly so in France thirty years ago: it may be the same in London to-day.

If Fergusson is one of the most neglected of the artists who have real talent in London to-day, it may be argued that this is entirely

his own fault. Twice he has had success—of a popular kind—well within his grasp, and twice he has deliberately turned his back on it, sought fresh fields, and made a new start.

The first Fergusson painting I ever saw was at the Royal Society of British Artists—an astonishing place to find a new talent! This was about 1904. It was a man's head, and attracted me alike by the virility of the drawing and the clean sweetness of the colour. Like that of several other young Edinburgh painters of his time—Peploe and Joseph Simpson, for example—Fergusson's first style was founded on the manner of Whistler. Only, both Fergusson and Peploe had a more masculine sense of form than appeared in the graceful femininity of Whistler. It was Whistler stiffened by Raeburn; but there was the effective use of the silhouette as the mainspring of the design, there was the suavity of the surface, the sweetness of colour—all qualities we associate with Whistler.

But though he may have profited by Whistler's precepts and example, with Fergusson "the Master" was not a resting-place—a burial-ground as it has been for many—but a point of departure. He soon edged away from

160 SOME CONTEMPORARY ARTISTS

Whistler's blue and silver colour schemes and drew nearer to the white cleanliness of Manet's paint. If he had settled down in London and allowed his painting to settle in a groove, I do not doubt that Fergusson, had he so chosen, could speedily have become a fashionable portrait painter. It was open to him to become a populariser and sweetener of Whistlerian portraiture. Already his work was beginning to be talked about, it was picked out from the London shows for international exhibitions, and in 1907 a long article on his paintings appeared in *The Studio*, and he was thought to have "arrived" both in portraiture and landscape.

But before this article appeared, Fergusson had already shaken the dust of London from his shoes and taken up his residence in Paris. There he was exposed to a tornado of new influences; but while keenly interested in every serious new art movement, his racial hard-headedness prevented him from being hastily swept into a vortex. Cool and collected, he watched the currents of contemporary painting, too wise to permit his personality to be sucked out and drowned in any one stream: in many he dabbled,

but he always kept his balance, cannily advancing from stage to stage, till he gradually evolved a new style of his own.

The change from a first to a second manner was clearly traceable in the strongly personal portraits which in 1909 earned Fergusson his election as a *Sociétaire* of the *Salon d'Automne*. His half-length portrait of *Miss Anne Estelle Rice* recalled Whistler's *Rosa Corder* in its expression of character by pose and by its silhouette, though the handling was looser and more direct. *In the Sunlight* marked another stage, when the artist, retaining his love of sweeping contours and large planes rather than small intimate touches, was assiduously seeking out the colour in shadows. As the title denoted, this was an open-air portrait, and the green shadows on the face tactfully suggested the surrounding trees. An intricate and complicated patchwork of warm and cool colour, rather than of light and shade, this portrait showed mastery in the orderly control whereby all the varied constituents were blended into one harmonious whole. For all its audacity of colour not a note rung out so prominently as to disturb the unity of the whole.

This painting marked Fergusson's passage from the impressionism of Whistler to that of Renoir. Truth and purity of colour was his keen concern at this time. In order that he might see better and more clearly he gave up smoking. "When I used to smoke," he told me, "I saw things like this," and he waved his hand about vaguely and languidly; "now," he continued, "I see things like this," and he stabbed the air rapidly with his finger. To keep his palette pure and bright he lived in a white studio, all white walls and white furniture. Here, as he explained, not only every note of colour in his sitter had its full value, but he knew if his painting, when finished, looked clean and true against his own white walls, it would look right anywhere else. A man who so lived to paint deserved to succeed.

His work continued to be eminently decorative; this was as much an ineradicable instinct as a conscious aim, but nothing was further from his mind than merely to trace arabesques and put together pleasing patterns. Terms of decoration were of value to him only in so far as they helped him to record with emotional emphasis his personal experience.

The flowered backgrounds which so frequently appeared in his portraits of 1909-1911 were no mere idle decorative accessories. They were chosen deliberately for the opportunities they afforded of echoing therein significant lines of the sitter's face and figure. They were not put in for their own sake or to fill up the canvas, and so they never distracted interest from the central figure. On the contrary, they helped to bring out, to accentuate and simplify, the essential characteristics of the personality portrayed. In the full-length of *Miss Elizabeth Dryden* the significant lines of her forehead and chin were balanced and repeated in the petals of hydrangeas in the background. These repetitions increased the rhythmic quality of the design as well as emphasising the significant traits of the sitter.

A wealth of accessories in *La Dame aux Oranges* orchestrated the curves and contours peculiar to the sitter into a rhythmic fugue of line and colour. In *The Spotted Scarf* we found accented syllables of paint playing an important part in determining character. It must be understood that Fergusson had, not a recipe, but a principle. The rhythm was delicately adapted to particularise each person

portrayed. The subtlety of this adaptation enabled him to be at once simple and significant, so that by a change of metre he could emphatically contrast the dignified repose of *Miss Elizabeth Dryden* with the vivacity of the girl in *The Spotted Scarf*.

This application of rhythm to the expression of character in portraiture was for some years a salient feature in Fergusson's painting. Together with his other qualities, it won for him a unique place in Paris, where in 1912 he was already regarded as a *chef d'école*, a painter whose work was influencing others.

But, again, just when people were talking of him and regarding him as a fixed and established painter, Fergusson's art began to change. For some years he had been gradually drawing away from impressionism towards the *fauviste* movement of which Henri Matisse was the acknowledged chief. Matisse has been something of a chameleon in painting, and it was the decorative aspect of Matisse, brilliantly exploited for a few years by Kees van Dongen, which particularly attracted Fergusson. His paintings began to grow simpler and simpler, his sense of form appeared ruder and more vigorous, his colour

shied away from sweetness to become stronger and more emphatic in its contrasts. The sophistication of Whistler had now entirely disappeared, and in its place we became more and more conscious of a primitive instinct for barbaric splendour.

Several of Fergusson's British admirers were puzzled, not to say shocked, when in February 1914 he contributed to the post-impressionist exhibition at the Doré Galleries a large painting entitled *Les Eus*. While some admired its joyous riot of colour and rhythmic design, others shrank from its robust paganism. Anæmic critics, who found a Rubens coarse to their taste, were in revolt against Fergusson's trumpet-like call to the joys of life. This, I take it, was the real significance of the composition. *Les Eus* means "The Healthy People," and the painting aimed at something more than suggesting a bacchanalian procession. According to its author, it was intended to represent a condition, "a state of superconsciousness of which neither the yokel (generally called healthy), nor the Eustace-Milesist, nor the Eugenist is capable." Without making any further attempt to decipher its philosophy,

I will merely say that this painting, decorative and fleshly whatever else it may have been, marked a new development of J. D. Fergusson's painting, one which in 1914 was more likely to be understood and sympathised with in Paris than in London. Accordingly, Fergusson left Paris that year and returned to England, where he has since remained.

Of Fergusson's third manner it is not easy to speak with assurance, for comparatively little has been exhibited. Within recent years he has given some of his time to sculpture, or rather to stone carving, and has shown a few vigorous heads which have a fine monumental feeling. Despite the difficulty of discovering what Fergusson is doing in the present, he has done enough in the past to win what is best worth having, namely, the attention and respect of his most highly gifted contemporaries.

HENRY LAMB

XII

HENRY LAMB

HENRY LAMB is, more or less, a young painter, he has never been a prolific painter, and his career as an artist was sadly interrupted by the War. For like his teacher at the Slade, Professor Tonks, Lamb was originally intended for the medical profession, and throughout the War he reverted to this and served with the R.A.M.C. Consequently his output to the present is not very large, but already he has done enough for us to know that there is no painter of his generation who can excel him in tragic power.

The time has long gone by since Lamb was classed with the late J. D. Innes and Derwent Lees as one of a group of promising ex-students of the Slade who had been greatly influenced by the work of Augustus John. Before 1914 Lamb had already developed a personality of his own, and the only excuse for relating him to John was the simplicity

and strength of his rendering of form and a tendency to state it according to a flat, decorative convention. He had given proof of his power to express emotion with an intensity that John has never yet approached.

It was by a single picture that Lamb leapt to fame among the discerning. His *Death of a Peasant*, exhibited at the New English Art Club, was the most poignant expression of the agony of grief that had been painted for many long years. I have heard that Mr Lamb, while spending a summer in Brittany, entered a cottage one day and saw a man bowed down in grief over the dead body of his mother. That is said to have given him the inspiration for this unforgettable picture. Like all great art, it is divinely simple. On a small canvas he showed us two heads and little more: the head of the recumbent woman, serene and stiff with death, and over it the bowed head of her son, his face contorted in a frightful agony of grief. The intensity of the expression made the picture positively painful, and yet it was beautiful too in the entire reverence of the treatment, in the admirable placing and balancing of the finely drawn heads, in the grave sobriety yet sweet-

ness of the colour. To find anything to equal the tragic force in this painting we have to look back across the centuries to some *Pieta* painted by an early Italian or Flemish master. As a *Pieta* of our own time Mr Lamb's painting was, and is, unique.

I have called it a "single picture," yet as a matter of fact Mr Lamb has painted two versions of his *Death of a Peasant*, one slightly smaller than the other, and both now in private collections in Yorkshire. The existence of the two versions should be recorded lest in the years to come some wiseacre contend that one of them is a copy by another hand.

About a year after his exhibition of this tremendous *tour-de-force*, Mr Lamb tried to repeat his triumph with a painting entitled *Lamentation*, in which he showed us a fugue of faces contorted with grief. It would have been wonderful had we not seen the other painting first ; it was well done, expressive, intense, but it lacked the simplicity and did not carry the conviction of the *Death of a Peasant*. It looked made up ; it took us back to the studio and not directly to life as the other had done. It was the difference between something imagined, a patchwork of memories,

and something seen with deep emotion and afterwards recorded in tranquillity.

All this was before the War, and it was long after peace had been declared that Mr Lamb again came on the scene as a painter. His return to the practice of art was signalled by the appearance in the Academy of 1921 of his great war-picture *Dressing Station on the Struma*. Founded on his actual experience in Macedonia, this picture, by reason of its great size, had to be treated decoratively rather than realistically, and on this account we could hardly expect it to show all the tremendous emotional power that Mr Lamb had revealed in his earlier and smaller pictures. All the same, it was by far the most powerful painting in the Academy of that year.

How well Mr Lamb made us enter into the feelings of the man leaning with his back to the tree, on our right as we face the picture ; how finely felt was the action and emotion of the central group. Decorative though it be and slightly formal in its general arrangement—and it would be easy to dwell on its qualities of design—obviously the dominant motive in the painting was the artist's horror of war and his intense pity for its victims.

Compared to the great fact of this emotion and Lamb's ability to convey it to others, his carpentry in putting his vision together is a minor matter. Whether at the moment of painting his ability was fully equal to the expression of all that he felt, is a point on which we may reserve judgment; it is a question of degree; the vital thing is that Lamb's picture is of the right kind. In technique the question of degree is of tremendous importance; in art questions of kind take a higher rank. In completeness of æsthetic utterance *Dressing Station on the Struma* is to my thinking inferior to *Death of a Peasant*, nevertheless the former is sufficiently articulate to make clear the artist's message, his meaning and his sincerity, and these are the important things for mankind.

Notwithstanding his six years' absence from our exhibition galleries, Henry Lamb within the last two years has succeeded in materially improving his position as a painter. His Academy picture of 1921 is now in the Manchester Art Gallery, and a Palestine war-picture by him is in the Tate. To the Academy of 1922 he did not contribute, but he more than made up for his absence

174 SOME CONTEMPORARY ARTISTS

there by his comprehensive one-man show during the spring in the Alpine Club Gallery. In this collection there was nothing with quite the tragic force of *Death of a Peasant*—one version of which really ought to have been included in the exhibition; but many things showed that Mr Lamb was still advancing and gaining in strength. Always a good draughtsman and a good designer, Lamb showed in this collection an extension of his range of colour and knowledge as well as taste in his renderings of sunlight.

All his salient characteristics, his keen psychological insight, the unconventionality of his point of view, the excellence of his drawing, and the personal distinction of his design, were impressively displayed in his large full-length portrait of *Mr Lytton Strachey*. The bearded man-of-letters was shown sprawling nonchalantly in the depths of a basket-chair beside a great window opening on a park scene; it was arresting in its apparent unconcernedness, intimate in its characterisation, and for all its quiet, wonderfully alive.

Painted just before the War, this portrait of Mr Strachey was lower in its key of colour than most of the other paintings in the Alpine

Club. In his most recent paintings Mr Lamb has been attracted by lighter and brighter schemes of colour. A splendid example of his latest manner was his portrait group *George Kennedy and Family*, in which incisive design and the charm of bright clean colour gave distinction and interest to an ordinary-looking family.

In this work, and in many of his other recent paintings, there is a simplicity which tempts some people to count Mr Lamb among the neo-primitives. But there is no deliberate attempt to be naïve in Mr Lamb's work : he is simple by reason of his natural desire to get his effect by the shortest way with the greatest economy of means. But he never stultifies his art for the sake of a false simplicity.

When he chooses to put forth his full powers there is not one of our younger painters who can give a greater intensity of expression to the human face. When he was painting *David John* it is fairly clear that Mr Lamb was really more interested in the sun effect on the boy's cheek than in his character, and indeed the rendering of sunlight on flesh in this head showed the artist's increased powers

as a colourist. No doubt it was a good likeness and not lacking in character, but the prime impulse here was not psychological. Very different, however, was the portrait *Mrs J. L. Behrend*, one of the finest portraits Lamb has yet painted, the eyes amazing in their liquid eloquence, the whole portrait a vivid yet delicate piece of characterisation. Here clearly the primary impulse was psychological, and the rendering of expression is supreme.

No final verdict is possible while an artist is still advancing and gaining strength, but this much can be said without hesitation, that had he painted nothing since *Death of a Peasant*, that picture in its two versions would suffice to make the name of Henry Lamb memorable and to keep his memory alive.

WYNDHAM LEWIS

XIII

WYNDHAM LEWIS

OF the real talent and ability of Mr Wyndham Lewis there can be no possible doubt ; but all sorts of doubts can and do exist as to what he will do with them. His restless energy finds expression fitfully in multifarious activities, and he attempts so many things, with so considerable a measure of brilliance, that we constantly wonder to what heights he might attain were all his powers concentrated on one thing, and one thing only. He has founded societies and periodicals, both of which take up time ; he has written tales and essays ; he has lectured ; he paints, and, above all, he draws.

Some twenty years ago, when he was still a boy in his 'teens—he was born in 1884—Wyndham Lewis was spoken of as “ the best draughtsman the Slade School has had since John.” That, at least, he still is to-day. The power and capacity of his drawing can

180 SOME CONTEMPORARY ARTISTS

no more be questioned now than when at the age of sixteen, a schoolboy from Rugby, he was the youngest student to win a scholarship at the Slade. But though he has never lost his powers of draughtsmanship, Lewis soon broke away from the somewhat insular ideals of the Slade. He wandered about Europe, studying art in France, Spain, and Holland, and he returned to England filled with Continental notions that would have horrified Legros. He got into touch with Sickert and his circle, and the first I remember of Lewis as an exhibitor is in connection with the inauguration at the Carfax Gallery of the newly formed Camden Town Group, which eventually evolved into the London Group. In that exhibition Lewis showed himself to be a decorative realist; the figures of his French fishermen were drawn strongly but they were kept flat to take their part in the decorative design, and already a certain squareness in the shapes was observable. This was about 1910. In a remarkably short time Lewis obtained a distinctive and recognised position among the younger generation of artists. For a brief period he worked with Mr Roger Fry, who had recently introduced

"Post-Impressionism" to England; but his personality was too strong and dominating to work long with any group except as its leader, and Lewis soon left the Omega Workshops to found his own Centre in Great Ormonde Street, whither he attracted Edward Wadsworth, William Roberts, and Frederick Etchells among painters, and Ezra Pound the poet. Thus in the years shortly before the War Lewis made some stir in London as the leader of the so-called Vorticist Group, and as founder-editor of that aggressive but stimulating quarterly *Blast*. He was the champion in England of "abstract painting," and his remarkable powers of design enabled him to produce original works of this description which impressed us by their colour and pattern even when we were wholly unable to comprehend their subject-matter and esoteric significance. This last is important, for Lewis has never been a mere maker of patterns. His pictures and drawings always express something or try to solve something. There is a well-known drawing of his belonging to this period entitled *Enemy of the Stars*, which certainly does not bear resemblance to any human form, yet it is evidently the

182 SOME CONTEMPORARY ARTISTS

solution of a problem in balance. We may regard it, if we will, as an exercise, something like trying to balance an isosceles triangle on its apex, but we cannot justly hold it to be meaningless.

Many people were completely mystified by the large painting entitled *Plan of Campaign*, which Lewis showed at the Allied Artists in June 1914. They could see a diagonal mass cut up into coloured stripes, but few had any idea what the artist was driving at. Yet this painting was no more "abstract" than the blocks of wood used in the War Game. What Lewis had done was to take for his point of departure the familiar diagram of a battle that we see in history books, with rectangles for infantry divisions, little squares for cavalry, white for the British, shaded for the enemy, and so on. To these Lewis had given colour, and then arranged them decoratively to give an emotional expression of a flank attack by which the left wing of one army enveloped and crushed the right wing of another. Once the idea is made clear to us, the painting becomes intelligible and its expression is seen to be successfully significant. But obviously a painting of this character is

absolutely incomprehensible to the spectator who looks for a representation of the appearances of human bodies and natural forms. Whether the enterprise was worth undertaking is debatable, but it was certainly an original idea ; and it was characteristic of the mental alertness of the artist to feel early in 1914 that there was " war in the air," and to begin painting a series of these strange designs all with titles taken from a military textbook, and all based on the tactical dispositions of *Kriegspiel*.

During the latter part of the War Lewis, who saw active service with the big guns, ceased to exhibit, but before he went out to France he made time to finish a novel, *Tarr*, which not only showed him to be a writer of distinction but also bore internal evidence that his mind was turning towards realism. Apart from one large oil-painting, included in the Canadian War Memorial Exhibition at Burlington House, Lewis showed nothing till February 1919, when a one-man show of his pictures and drawings opened at the Goupil Gallery.

These exhibits dealt entirely with his War experience, with what the artist saw and lived

through over in France, and the drawings as a series formed a complete record of the life in the field of the big guns. The drawings were representative, in that each one showed some stage in the process of bringing the big guns into action, but they were not in the least photographic or naturalistic. Whether Lewis showed us *Battery pulling in*, *Relief coming up*, or *Battery Salvo*—three exceptionally fine designs—he invariably subordinated his subject to pictorial requirements, and held our attention by the admirable structure of his composition as well as by his vigorous presentation of the essential details.

The work of the Royal Garrison Artillery is to so great an extent mechanical, that there was purpose and fitness in presenting the men as automaton, as parts of a great machine, rather than as responsible self-governing human beings. Lieut. Wyndham Lewis emphasised the automatic aspect of the rank and file; and while it was possible to regard this treatment of the human figure as a survival of the artist's original vorticism, it was on the other hand perfectly defensible on the grounds of realism,—that more profound realism which seeks to show things not merely

as they appear to the camera, but as they impress the mind of a thoughtful reasoning being.

In a foreword to the catalogue of this exhibition, Lewis wrote :—

“ It is always a source of astonishment to the public that an artist should not attempt to transcribe Nature literally, without comment, without philosophy, without vision.”

I suppose he is right, and that is why the illustration that merely *shows*, without philosophic comment, is always popular. Now in these drawings we had a complete and coherent philosophy such as no modern war pictures — excepting those of Mr Nash — had yet shown. But the work of Paul Nash was essentially the work of a landscape painter, whose philosophy was concerned with the tortured earth rather than with the beings who crept over its corrugated surface. Wyndham Lewis is essentially a figure painter, and his philosophy of war was concerned more with the mutilation of man than with the desecration of the countryside.

In his large painting for the Canadian Government, as in these drawings, Lewis concentrated his attention on the human

figure ; notwithstanding the fact that he knew his treatment of the human figure must inevitably provoke controversy. His drawing is controversial because it is drawing with a point, drawing with a comment ; and the essence of that comment will be found in the philosophic standpoint of the artist. The slaves of the guns thus appear in the light of insects rather than men,—highly organised, highly specialised insects, working in unison to a common end. The big-gun battery takes on the aspect of a gigantic ant-hill, with a personnel as busy and as efficient as ants, no more but no less significant.

It was not to be expected that this cosmic view of the Great War would find favour with everyone, but it was a highly personal, serious, and thoughtful view that deserved respect and consideration.

It must be admitted that in addition to the forcible drawing, dignified colour, and carefully wrought-out design which we find in the work of Wyndham Lewis, there is ever beneath these a sense of what Dante Gabriel Rossetti called “fundamental brainwork,” and this gives an unusual power to Lewis’s work both as painter and novelist. Remarkable as these

artillery subjects were in their draughtsmanship and design, a still more striking revelation of Lewis's powers as a painter were given in the autumn of the same year at the Goupil Gallery Salon, to which he contributed a portrait of the poet *Ezra Pound*. The tremendous power of this heroic portrait, iron in construction, steel in its incisive draughtsmanship, rich and sombre in its colour, yet certainly not metallic in its general effect, made it tower above everything in the exhibition. Yet things were not made easy for Lewis here from want of competition. The exhibition itself was a collection including pictures by John, Pryde, Nicholson, Wilson Steer, Guevara, Sickert, Ginner, and dozens of other excellent painters—something over three hundred in all; and yet despite their varied attractiveness and merit, almost every painting looked a little soft beside the Wyndham Lewis.

Of course people who think every picture should be pretty and gentle were shocked by this portrait of Mr Ezra Pound. But it is idle to waste time by lamenting the absence of qualities which a painter neither possesses nor desires. The important thing is to discover what qualities he has got. Strength,

vigour, and vitality, all these are in the Ezra Pound portrait, and added to them are fine design and telling colour. You may say that this is not your idea of a poet, that you do not believe Mr Pound to be a giant or a man of iron ; but you cannot deny the tremendous life and energy in the painting. The old idea that a picture should be "restful" and full of repose does not appeal to the advanced painters of a younger generation. Far from desiring their paintings to be regarded as sedatives, they wish them to be stimulants which will galvanise us into action. Wyndham Lewis is not out to charm and soothe us with soporific art. What he is after he tells us himself in that provocative book of essays entitled *The Caliph's Design* :—

"You must get Painting, Sculpture, and Design out of the studio and into life somehow or other."

Lewis has the right to say this, for he practises what he preaches. There is nothing of the studio and everything of life in his portrait of Ezra Pound.

Since he painted this portrait, Wyndham Lewis has invented a new genre, or at least discovered a new slogan, for it is a weakness

of his—as a painter—to be unduly fascinated by the magic of a word. For the moment the blessed word is “Tyro”; it is the title of a new periodical he has launched, and “Tyro paintings” were the feature of his last one-man show at the Leicester Galleries. Whatever these may be in theory, so far they have proved in practice to be satirical paintings, portraits in which the standpoint and the methods employed in the *Ezra Pound* have been pushed to extremes. There is no reason why a man should not paint caricatures as well as draw them; there is nothing unlawful in the practice of satiric painting. Nor need we expect a modern artist necessarily to tread in the path of Hogarth, Goya, or Daumier; but we may at least demand that his aim be as high and his expression as powerful.

A painter so keenly intellectual as Wyndham Lewis is possesses the right sort of equipment for satire. Already he has given proof that he may develop into a satirical artist of high power and pungency, but hitherto he has failed to make the most of these gifts in the exercise. His satires have tended to be parochial, and he has dwarfed his powers by the triviality of his themes. Swift would not

have shaken the world had he limited his invective to the people who had trodden on his toes; but when he attacked the whole human race, and showed its inferiority to horses, then he compelled the world to listen to him. When Wyndham Lewis rises from the particular to the universal, when he can find something he hates as much as Daumier hated the Law, then he may become the greatest satiric artist England has had since Hogarth.

C. W. R. NEVINSON

XIV

C. W. R. NEVINSON

TIME, I have heard it said, revenges himself on all that is done without his aid, and for this reason I am anxious about Mr Christopher W. R. Nevinson. His reputation has been made with such meteoric rapidity, that one naturally feels a little uncertain as to its stability and power of lasting. That his early success was deserved, I have ever been one of the first to admit: what remains to be seen is whether having once commanded success, he will continue to make it his desert.

My earliest recollection of Nevinson is of an impressionist who, somewhere about 1911, exhibited at the Allied Artists a London suburban landscape in which such common objects as gasometers were shown transfigured to beauty by the touch of prismatic sunlight. I do not remember any subsequent painting by Mr Nevinson which has shown quite the

same tender beauty of colour possessed by this early work. But since then Mr Nevinson has wandered far from impressionism, and beauty of colour has not been his chief objective.

In one respect he is unique. I do not know of any other English artist who has been profoundly influenced by the Italian Futurists. Mr Nevinson, not very long after he had left the Slade School, attached himself by ties of friendship to Gino Severini, and just before the War he was painting according to the rather bewildering ideals and practice of the Futurists. I well remember one of his paintings of this period, a circular picture of the interior of a compartment in a "Tube" in which the vibration of seated figures and strap-hangers was kaleidoscopically expressed in vivid bright colours. Even then there was no doubt of his cleverness or of his ability to convey clearly what he wanted to express. But in those days nobody took very much notice of Nevinson. For a very brief time he was associated with Wyndham Lewis and the Vorticists, but he never accepted the Vorticist theory, and he was far too independent an artist to become one of a group. He was a lonely figure, the only English Futurist.

Then came the War, and Nevinson, with the flair of a journalist, was quick to grasp the greatness of his opportunity. Though subsequently invalided on account of rheumatic fever, he was one of the first British artists to go on active service in Flanders during the autumn of 1914. His experiences there of the realities of war proved a healthy corrective to the extravagances of artistic theories, but his vision of the new realism was informed by a knowledge of all the good that was to be gained from the most advanced painting of the time.

Up to 1914 we may say that Nevinson was entirely unknown except to the few people who were interested in our native post-impressionist painting ; but in the spring of 1915 he soon became one of the artists most talked about in London. This change was brought about by three pictures which he sent to the exhibition of the London Group at the Goupil Gallery. These paintings, *Ypres after the Second Bombardment*, *Taube Pursued by Commander Samson*, and *Returning to the Trenches*, were the first war-pictures to create a stir. They were topical, they were new things shown in a new way. Nevinson

had got his blow in first, and he captured the imagination of London as no subsequent painter of the War was ever able to do. These pictures still showed signs of futurist influence, but though strange and new they were intelligible to the public and based on what the artist had actually seen while driving his motor-ambulance behind the Belgian front.

Dr Johnson once maintained that there was some good to be got out of every book. So it may be urged, some good may be got out of every artistic theory. The particular good thing to be got out of the work of the Italian Futurists was their successful rendering of the suggestion of movement. This was obtained by a generous use of slanting lines in the composition; and this convention not only gave life and movement to such a painting as *Returning to the Trenches*, but used regularly and with an avoidance of curves, it also tended to suggest the movement of a vast machine rather than of individual human beings. It was the peculiar triumph of Mr Nevinson to leave aside all the extravagances of Futurism and snatch from it the two things that helped him to render realistically a new world in a new way.

At once in 1915 he stood apart from all other painters of the War by reason of these two things: his extraordinary power and success in suggesting movement, and the implication in all his pictures that modern war is not an affair of individuals but the creaking progress of a complicated machine. In its lower half, consisting of geometrical forms, *Returning to the Trenches* illustrates what Mr Nevinson was doing before the War, and this part of the picture is not clearly intelligible; but the upper half showed what he learnt from the War and the direction in which he was afterwards to develop. Though strange and curious, this upper half was perfectly easy to understand. These French soldiers, with their packs on their backs and their bodies and rifles sloping in the direction of their advance, were not painted as the camera would see them, but they were indisputably alive and moving. No attempt was made to give portraits of a collection of single soldiers; the endeavour was to express the forward movement of an army on the march, and that impression is vividly and irresistibly conveyed.

A similar impression is given in the picture

198 SOME CONTEMPORARY ARTISTS

A Dawn: 1917, of a column of troops passing through a village street, only here the French troops are seen not from the flank but in face from above, and the suggestion of movement is given principally by the zig-zag lines of the bayonets. Many other pictures might be cited, and if I have laid stress on *Returning to the Trenches*, it is because this is not only one of the most interesting pictures painted by Mr Nevinson, but also a key-picture to his transition from Futurism to Realism. As Besnard popularised impressionism in Paris, so Nevinson has done much to popularise post-impressionism in London. Looking at these transitional pictures of his, people began to think that there might be something in the new movement after all, and they were at all events disposed to look more seriously at new pictures which were more difficult to understand.

Though Mr Nevinson enjoyed greater facilities and privileges when he returned to France in July 1917 as an "official artist" than he had done as a motor-mechanic in 1914 and 1915, I confess his later war-pictures have never seemed to me so interesting as his earlier ones. Possibly he was now more

hampered by other people's ideas than he had been in the beginning, possibly he was growing a little tired of the subject, but his later war-pictures tended to become more ordinary and often lacked the vitality and *élan* of the early pictures. It is the earlier pictures we remember best, *The Doctor* with its grim statement of the horrors of a casualty station, or that terrible impression of the victims of war laid out in rows, *La Patrie*. I think nearly all Nevinson's best work can be found in his first book of reproductions, *Modern War*, published in 1917. In this is the very best, to my thinking, of all Nevinson's war-landscapes, *Flooded Trench on the Yser*. It is magnificently and poignantly simple, as effective in design as a Japanese colour-print, and with the falling rain expressed with the economy and truth of oriental convention.

Perhaps the secret of the power of the earlier paintings is that in them the design is more strongly emphasised than the realism. That is why the bodies of marching troops were more striking than the portraits of soldiers, though now and again works of this nature were made interesting by their characterisation. One of the best of them in this

200 SOME CONTEMPORARY ARTISTS

respect is known as *A Group of Soldiers*, in which Mr Nevinson cleverly stated the one great truth about the British soldier after 1914, namely, that he was just the British working-man disguised in khaki. The hands in this portrait-group may or may not be exaggerated, but in any case they rightly emphasise the essential truth that these men belonged to the "horny-handed" class.

Though as time went on Mr Nevinson lost nearly all his Futurism, he clung to simplicity in many of his later war-paintings. *The Road from Arras to Bapaume* gave the essential truth of a remembered impression. All inessential details were suppressed, with the result that the main recollections of the truth—the white switchback track of Roman straightness, the lopped-down tree-trunks, the moving traffic and the limitless expanse—were recorded with strength and vividness.

A similar simplicity gave distinction to one of his set of four paintings illustrating *The Roads of France*, which with other pictures were shown in the Nevinson Exhibition at the Leicester Galleries in March 1918. By seizing a bending road for his subject, Mr Nevinson in the first of this set of paintings

was able to convey the impression of an endless chain of vehicles going up to the front through country unravaged by the war. The poplars diminishing in the distance all added to the suggestion of infinity. In the third panel, which showed infantry and horse-artillery passing beyond the dumping grounds, the method is quite different from the early *Returning to the Trenches*, but still a slight emphasis given to the diagonal lines of the advancing infantry conveys the suggestion of movement. Diagonal lines are again slightly emphasised in the treatment of the gun-team, the taut legs of the horses suggesting the strain of the load they are dragging forward. There is still movement, but these pictures have nothing like the energy and force of the earlier paintings.

One is obliged to consider Mr Nevinson primarily as a war-painter because it was by his war-paintings that he became famous in so incredibly short a time. Much that attracted in 1915 is no longer a novelty, and I am not sure that it was really any good fortune for Mr Nevinson that he should have been first in the field with the aeroplane picture, a new subject of which he was quick

202 SOME CONTEMPORARY ARTISTS

to take advantage. His paintings of aerial warfare certainly attracted a good deal of attention at the time, because they were a novelty, but I doubt if the effect of any of them is or will be so lasting as that of other pictures I have mentioned. I am sure that novelty of treatment has a more abiding interest than any novelty of subject.

Since the War Mr Nevinson has painted many things. He has painted gay river scenes on the Thames with something of a return to his early impressionism, and he has painted New York, often finding telling designs among her railways and sky-scrapers. But he has painted nothing with the force and power of the war-pictures that bowled us over in 1915. Yet I remember one painting of his, a painting of a subject also carried out as a lithograph, which I am sure will linger long in my memory. It was a painting of a great wave, presented with a simplicity and swirl of design that made me think of Korin and the great painters of China. Linking this up with other of the most memorable paintings of Mr Nevinson, confirms me in my belief that his strength is in his design. His drawing is good, but we should never call him

a great draughtsman ; his colour has never been particularly beautiful, and he has never thrilled us by showing a fine sense of quality in his paint ; but his design has often intrigued us and frequently won our respect. The War gave him an opportunity to apply his inventive design to a theme it could express admirably, but since the War it seems to have lost its sense of direction.

Whatever he may do in the future, Mr Nevinson may feel tolerably easy about the past. His war-pictures of 1915 and 1916 will assuredly live not only as grim records of an historical tragedy but also as manifestations of the new ideals which animated the younger artists at the beginning of the twentieth century.

PAUL AND JOHN NASH

XV

PAUL AND JOHN NASH

ABOUT 1911-1912 certain water-colours began to be remarked in the exhibitions of the New English Art Club. They were different from any other drawings shown at the club, and had a simplicity of treatment, a naïve, almost child-like, outlook that annoyed some and proved irresistible to others. Hitherto New English water-colours had belonged more or less definitely to one of two categories: there was the school of "inspired blobs," of which the late H. B. Brabazon was the most brilliant exemplar; and there was the conservative school who held by the traditions of the Early British School and showed water-colours based on careful drawing and only slightly tinted with colour. Mr D. S. MacColl was an accomplished exponent of this style.

These new water-colours could be placed in neither category. They were the work of two brothers, quite young men, Paul Nash and

208 SOME CONTEMPORARY ARTISTS

John Nash. Paul was the elder, having been born in London in 1889, and after leaving St Paul's school he studied for a time at the Slade. John was born in 1893, and after leaving Wellington College did not attend any art school. Thereby, in the opinion of some, the younger brother had an advantage over the elder, and it may be that the self-taught John had some forming influence on the Slade-trained Paul. However that may be, the early exhibits of Paul Nash did not correspond to the type of the recognised Slade drawing, and though there were differences of individuality in the work of the two brothers, their drawings were alike in character.

Both the brothers made use of line—the foundation of their work was a pen-drawing, and this black line had a fascinating calligraphic quality; but their drawings were not slightly tinted, the colour was full and strong, laid on in flat washes. Interesting as their work was in execution—and each showed from the first an original talent for design—what differentiated these water-colours from all else was their conception. They were primitive without aping any primitive old master; they were simplified without

showing the slightest trace of any knowledge of Matisse and the contemporary French simplifiers ; they revealed an extraordinary innocence of vision and a sense of child-like delight and wonderment in all they saw and painted. This innocence of outlook was more marked in the work of John Nash than in that of the slightly more sophisticated Paul, and for this reason some connoisseurs in these early days thought that of the two John would go further. There is a very beautiful early water-colour by John Nash in the Leeds Art Gallery, *Trees in a Flood*. It is as simple as simple could be—tall pointed trees silhouetted against the sky, while below them is the expanse of sodden grass and green-tinged water. It is not in the least “realistic,” yet it is as true as a vivid memory of something once loved and never forgotten. It is quiet, yet it hits us hard ; it is free from all clap-trap, but full of emotion and tender feeling.

But though the work of John Nash has gone on appealing more and more to a restricted body of connoisseurs and collectors, it was Paul who first came to the front and won the wider recognition that springs from popular favour.

210 SOME CONTEMPORARY ARTISTS

Both brothers served during the War with the Artists' Rifles, but Paul was the first to go out to France, and the first to return with records of his experiences there. In the spring of 1916 a small collection of war sketches by Paul Nash was shown at the Goupil Gallery : they were rough sketches, often mere notes, impressions he had been able to jot down in the leisure moments of his soldier's life in the trenches. They attracted little attention from the general public, but they roused the enthusiasm of a few critics, who saw in Paul Nash a genius inspired by experience to express the pictorial essence of war.

Later, when an exhibition of his war-water-colours was held at the Leicester Galleries, all London was thrilled by the work of Paul Nash, and the publication by *Country Life* of a book of his war-drawings made his pictures known and talked about all over England. The wonderful thing about these water-colours of Paul Nash was that they showed, not so much the superficial aspect of war, as its inner significance. They were weird and strange, yet an incontrovertible mass of evidence attested that they were true. Nobody who has not actually beheld the scene painted by

an artist can pronounce whether or no it is true. Among the soldiers who had been there, only two opinions were expressed about these water-colours: some said they were "absolutely true," others that they were "a bit exaggerated but about right." They did contain exaggerations, but the things exaggerated were always the significant characteristics of the scene.

In *Inverness Copse*—a profoundly moving picture—the lumps and holes in the foreground were a pointed commentary on the deeply pit-marked earth exposed to constant shelling. The barbed-wire entanglement may have been out of all proportion in *Landscape, Year of Our Lord, 1917*, but it loomed largely in the mind of the soldier who had shortly to advance through and across it; it did curl about in extraordinary ways after it had been broken up by gun-fire. Paul Nash painted his subjects as seen by the mind's eye, not only as seen by the eye physical, and the mind of man ever enlarges that which it has good cause to fear. These water-colours may not have been true to the vision of the camera, but they were true to the memory of nerve-racked fighting men. People who never saw a *Shell Bursting*

could form a very fair idea of what it meant to a man in its neighbourhood by looking at Nash's picture.

In these water-colours Paul Nash proved himself to be a most sensitive artist and a painter with imagination. In each of these works he recorded not only what he had seen, but what he had *felt*. What he appeared to feel above all was the abomination of desolation caused by war, the agony of torment inflicted on a happy, peaceful countryside. He felt this as Blake might have felt it; and each drawing was a cry from the heart that war is accursed, a black crime to earth and man. To this day they are the most moving and powerful plea in art for peace.

By the midsummer of 1917 it was perfectly clear that the two artists who had most to say about the War and could say it most eloquently were Nevinson and Paul Nash. One complemented the other Nevinson exposed the soulless mechanism of the "army machine"; Paul Nash showed us its awful devastating effects and presented the earth as a living entity conscious of its violation and defilement.

Eventually, Paul Nash was appointed an

“ official artist ” also, and during the later stages of the War he painted in oils as well as in water-colour ; he painted bigger pictures, but he never painted better. Since the War Paul Nash has continued painting both in oil and water-colour ; he has returned to peaceful and pastoral scenes and has been particularly happy in painting the coast and country about Dymchurch in Kent, finding congenial subjects for his design in the low skylines and old-world charm of the eastern edge of Romney Marsh. The steps at Dymchurch he has painted again and again with fresh distinction and interest. He hates now to be thought of as a war-painter, yet the label is almost sure to stick to him, because even if he paints better now than he did then, if he paints things more intrinsically pleasing in themselves, yet he has never felt anything so keenly as he felt war. There is a poignancy in his early water-colours of the War that he has never since approached, and though he has increased his skill in oil-painting, though he has exercised this on large canvasses, still he has never done anything more powerful and moving than his small water-colour of *Inverness Cope*.

Although John Nash also served in France

214 SOME CONTEMPORARY ARTISTS

between 1916 and 1918, though he also painted water-colours and oils of war-subjects, he has entirely escaped being labelled as a war-painter. His water-colours were equal to those of Paul, but by the time they appeared the point of view had lost its novelty, people who were unaware how evenly each brother had grown and developed were inclined to regard John's war-pictures as a reflection of those of Paul. Of course, all who knew their pre-war work knew better, and were aware that the family likeness in their work was due, not to any imitation, but to a similarity of temperament and outlook.

Like his brother Paul, John also made large oil-paintings of war-subjects for the Imperial War Museum—one of them is in the Tate Gallery; but it is not yet proved that the work of either brother increases in intensity when the dimensions are enlarged. Both are at their best, I think, in water-colours, though both have recently shown increasing skill and knowledge in the handling of oil-paint. A *Snow Scene* by John Nash, shown at the London Group in May 1922, was not only winning in its expressive simplicity, but marked a fresh stage in his self-taught art

by its skilful handling of oil pigment. The following month Paul Nash contributed to the New English Art Club *Dymchurch: End of the Steps*, one of the best things he had yet done in oils. Wholly free from a woolliness that marked some of his landscapes, its directness and clear definition enhanced its effective design.

By a happy coincidence, the most important collection of the work of John Nash that has yet been got together, his one-man show at the Goupil Gallery in February 1921, synchronised with an exhibition of African idols in the same gallery, the best of which had just those virtues and qualities that we admire in the work of the contemporary artist. These savage carvings and the pictures of John Nash both have the charm of sincerity, that freedom from reserve or equivocation which becomes an honest mind, and the real distinction between them is the difference between the untutored mind of a savage and the intellect of a Christian gentleman.

To John Nash the world is full of wonderful things, and he tells us about them with the fresh delight and direct openness of an unspoilt child. His unaffected pleasure in the

pattern cast by the trunks of trees on the pinkish ground of a wood was confessed in one water-colour: his boyish zest for the fun of a farmyard, with its collection of animals and rich confusion, was expressed in an oil-painting with the unconscious pride of a child setting out for the first time the contents of his Noah's Ark.

There is no lack of skill in the work of John Nash. There was beautiful pen-and-ink drawing in his water-colour *Winter Scene in the Chilterns*, there was fine harmony of rich colour and an exquisite appreciation of "values" in his vista of a *Wood Interior*; but with him skill has never been an end in itself; it is merely a means whereby to convey his vision. This vision is neither that of the Olympian who blandly accepts, nor that of the Titan who fretfully rebels; it is the vision of the mystic who wonders and praises God. The art of John Nash is all humility, without a touch of arrogance; and because it is humble, sincere, unaffected, and expressive, it contains the elements of true greatness, the marks of an art that will live.



A List
of New Books
Published by
Leonard Parsons, Ltd.
Autumn
1922



DEVONSHIRE STREET, LONDON, W.C.

*Telephone No. :
Museum 964*

*Telegraphic Address :
"Erudite, Westcent, London"*

FICTION

AND HAVE NOT LOVE, by *Hamilton Fyfe* (author of "The Widow's Cruse"). 7/6 net.

The six weeks Mill Rayne spends in prison divide sharply her dull office life from her life in Henry Bell's House of Duty. How she fares in that queer house and how Henry "breaks out" make up a story that is half sheer entertainment and half a witty parable. Mr. Fyfe is a man of the modern world, but he is also a detached and smiling observer—with a clear eye for our follies and a kindly eye for our sins. To miss reading him is to miss an uncommon and stimulating experience.

THE LAND OF MOONSHINE, by *Mary L. Pendered*. 7/6 net.

Valentine Prescott lives in an old house, cultivating a garden of delight, until the realities of life begin to press about her and undermine her fastidious egoism. The romantic lover of her dreams vanishes into the moonshine whence he came and she prepares to face the sorrow and suffering of the world without flinching. This brief record is set in an English village, whose people are amusingly sketched by one who knows country life well.

EVE OF SABA, by *Lester Ralph* (author of "Geoghan's Kid"). 7/6 net.

Impelled by temperament and the force of circumstances, the hero of Lester Ralph's new novel drifts from the Bohemia of London to that of Montreal, via the author's beloved West Indies, unwinding the skein of his strangely complicated destiny; but it is with Saba—that anomalous and little-known Dutch West Indian dependency—that the action of this novel is chiefly concerned.

CONSTANCY, by *Nora Kent* (author of "The Greater Dawn"). 7/6 net.

The story of a woman who is desired by two men. The book is based on the eternal struggle between the two world-forces—the Nature of the Beast and the spark of the Divine in Mankind. How Ruth eventually wins through to freedom and happiness, despite the evil influences against her is told in a succession of picturesque and arresting incidents culminating in the final triumph of Good.

THE LAND OF THE LIVING, by *Calcott Reading*. 7/6 net.

"The Land of the Living" describes the life of a family, who through the iron will of a dour Calvinistic mother, stung to fury by the disgrace of one of her daughters, is banished to a grim farm-house in the wilds of Cumberland. Into this prison, a veritable sepulchre, creeps life again in the person of the man, who, all unwittingly, takes up his abode in the house of the girl he has betrayed. The description of the latter's remorse upon finding the girl and her child treated as outcasts and pariahs in a respectable home makes tragic and powerful reading.

THE SELLER OF PERFUMES, by *Thora Stowell*. 7/6 net.

For all her youth and success, Sally Mayhew has been starved of life, until, in Egypt, she finds both life and love. The mystery and glamour of Egypt are well described in this powerful story of Anglo-Egyptian life. Love is hot and reckless, and life runs swiftly under its strange skies. Sally herself is a strange creature—a dreamer with an eager heart—to whom things were bound to happen, as happen they do, in a breathless, vivid fashion, that makes this a novel of high romance.

4 NEW & FORTHCOMING BOOKS

VERONICA: The War Widow, by *Baroness d'Anethan* (author of "Two Women"). 7/6 net.

How long can a young and beautiful woman mourn even a beloved husband? Veronica has mourned her husband for six years and the thought of re-marriage is distasteful to her. When she finds herself in love with an attaché at Tokyo she runs away, in horror of herself. But passion is too strong and she surrenders.

In the rest of the novel the reader will find many unusual incidents giving vivid glimpses of the life of aristocratic Japan, which add to the charm of this uncommon love story.

OUT OF THE AIR, by *Inez Haynes Irwin*. 7/6 net.

David Lindsay, a young aviator, recently returned from France, retires to a house in the country to write. He discovers gradually that the place is haunted. He finds that his mysterious visitors are trying to give him a message which he cannot understand, but which he realises is becoming a matter of life and death. Out of this extraordinary situation emerges a charming romance, in which mystery and realism are combined to an unusual degree.

THE HOUSE OF THE FIGHTING COCKS, by *Henry Baerlein*. 7/6 net.

Observer: "It is full of almost comically discursive, amazingly many and varied bits of erudition . . . its roguish humanity may draw a wide public."

THE WOMAN IN BLUE, by *Mrs. J. O. Arnold* (author of "Garth"). 7/6 net.

Evening News: "A very good story, which the author handles with considerable skill."

LEONARD PARSONS LIMITED

ESCAPE, by *Jeffery E. Jeffery*. 7/6 net.

Third Impression

Daily Telegraph: "This powerful story deserves the consideration of every thinking man and woman. . . . Mr. Jeffery is to be congratulated upon a very strong and moving story."

THEODORE SAVAGE, by *Cicely Hamilton*.

7/6 net.

Second Impression

Evening Standard: "A book of much cleverness and insight . . . it deserves to be widely read."

GENERAL LITERATURE

THE BIRTH OF YUGOSLAVIA, by *Henry Baerlein*. Two Volumes. 42/- net.

A considerable part of post-war Europe is occupied by the country called Yugoslavia, the land of the Southern Slavs. Our knowledge concerning it is perhaps a little vague; and if we try, by reading this the only history of all the Yugo-slavs, to get some idea of the people we shall find that they have a story which is far from being dull.

GLIMPSES OF SOUTH AMERICA, by *F. A. Sherwood*. Illustrated. 18/- net.

This is not a book by a hurried traveller. Mr. Sherwood is a business man who lives in South America. He has studied the people and the country, and has travelled over many sections of it. He has collected numerous photographs, and his book is exceptionally strong in pictorial material.

Mr. Sherwood's style is unusual for a travel book. There are no long chapters, no exhaustive descriptions. People and places are presented to the reader in brief, brilliant characterisations.

6 NEW & FORTHCOMING BOOKS

THE ISLE OF VANISHING MEN, by *W. F. Alder*. Illustrated. 8/6 net.

A very unusual travel book of a little-known portion of the earth. It is about that out-of-the-way island, New Guinea, inhabited by cannibals whose practices furnish the reason for the title of this book.

Mr. Alder saw most unusual, curious, interesting and fascinating things, and secured some very remarkable photographs which illustrate this book.

THE BOYS' BOOK OF MODEL AEROPLANES, by *Francis A. Collins*. Illustrated. 8/6 net.

This makes an excellent gift-book for boys.

It covers all of the phases of young people's interest in the art and science of the aeroplane, including clubs, tournaments, prizes, etc., giving models, discussion of principles, building and flying instructions, and photographs of actual planes of all types, often with their young builders and flyers. It supersedes two earlier boys' books on model aeroplanes by Mr. Collins.

SOME CONTEMPORARY ARTISTS, by *Frank Rutter*. Illustrated. 7/6 net.

In this book Mr. Rutter surveys the actual state of contemporary British painting, and treats in detail of the work of representative artists of the day. Appreciations are given, among others, of Augustus John, Sir William Orpen, William Rothenstein and Walter Sickert, while particular attention is given to some of our younger artists such as Wyndham Lewis, Nevinson and the brothers John and Paul Nash.

LEONARD PARSONS LIMITED

SAMUEL PEPYS: Administrator, Observer, Gossip, by *E. Hallam Moorhouse*. 6/- net.

Strange as it may seem, this is the only full-length biography of that most fascinating person, Samuel Pepys. He was a great lover of life, and whether he writes of his own clothes or the King's navy, he has an ardour and enjoyment in it that carries him straight to the heart of the reader. We may laugh at him, we may even be a little shocked at him, but we cannot read the full story of his life without realising that he was a great Englishman, and, unlike many distinguished Englishmen, he was never dull.

AUTHORSHIP: A Guide to Literary Technique, by "*A Well-known Author*." 5/- net.

This is a small volume intended for those who aspire to the literary art. The subject is treated in such an interesting manner that it will be found not merely instructive to those who are seeking practical knowledge in the hope of becoming a short-story writer, novelist, playwright, or cinema scenarist; but extremely entertaining to all fiction-readers and playgoers. It is written by the author of many successful books, who knows the art of authorship and how to impart this knowledge.

UNDER THE ACROCERAUNIAN MOUNTAINS, by *Henry Baerlein*. 6/- net.

There is an interesting region in the Balkans—some call it Southern Albania, others call it Northern Epirus—the fate of which is hanging in the balance. Shall it belong to Albania or to Greece? The question has been debated with something less than calmness by the supporters of each party. The writer of this book has lately travelled there and now sets before us the views of the long-suffering population.

8 NEW & FORTHCOMING BOOKS

THE OUTLINE OF H. G. WELLS, by
Sidney Dark. 5/- net.

A popular critical study of the writer who has been justly described as the greatest intellectual force in the English speaking world.

Daily Telegraph: "A decidedly interesting and profitable study."

The Times: "Shrewd and enlightening."

Sunday Times: "Interesting and stimulating."

SOCIAL STRUGGLES IN ANTIQUITY,
by *M. Beer.* 6/- net.

This new book by M. Beer, author of "A History of British Socialism," is the first volume of "A General History of Social Struggles." This work, which is translated by H. J. Stenning, contains a lucid and deeply interesting study of the development of the ancient world.

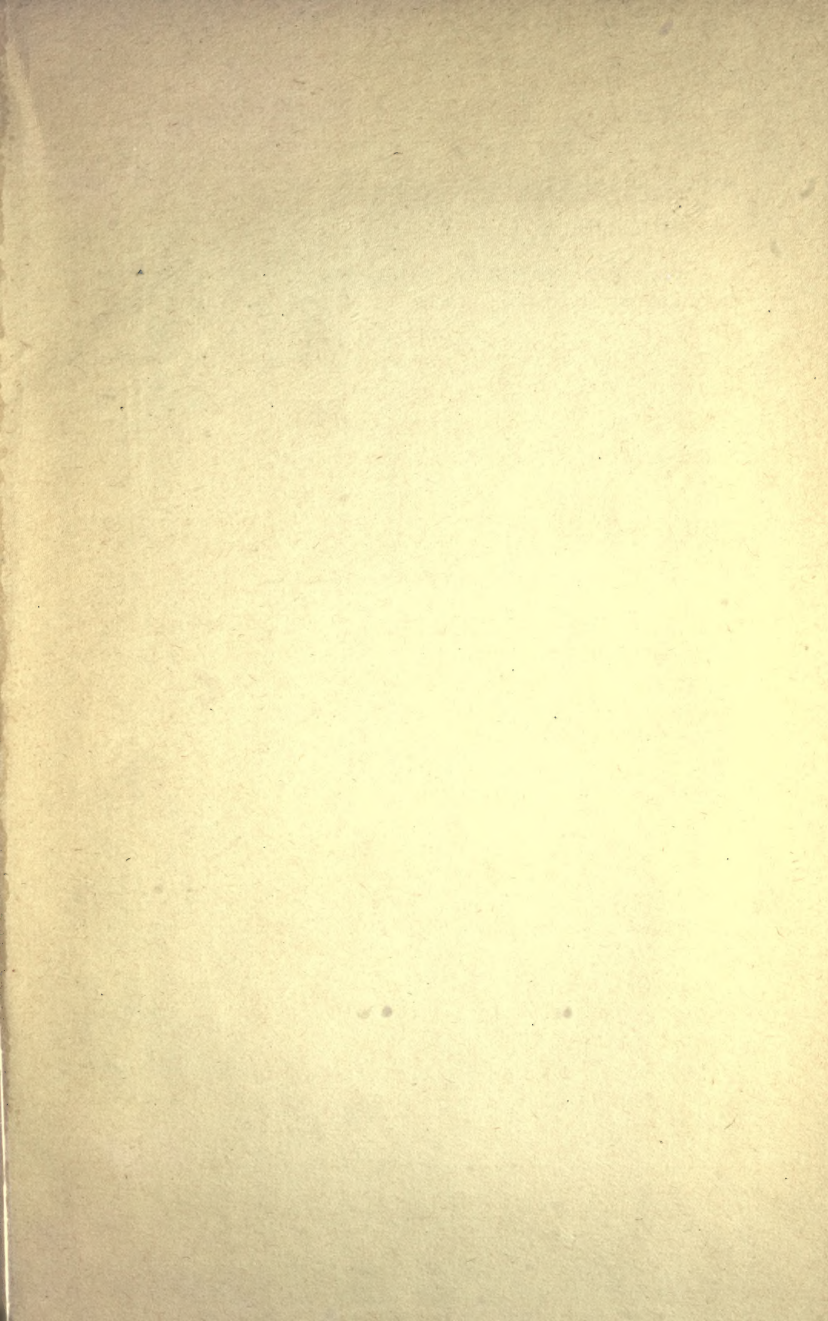
SOME CONTEMPORARY NOVELISTS
(Men), by *R. Brimley Johnson.* 6/- net.

This book is concerned with Youth: it deals not with the "big guns" booming, but with a few free spirits, alert and vital, quick to see and to speak, fearless and independent.

Among the novelists discussed are:—J. D. Beresford, Gilbert Cannan, W. L. George, D. H. Lawrence, Compton Mackenzie, Frank Swinnerton and Hugh Walpole.

Mr. Brimley Johnson reveals the fine art of their craftsmanship and the bright glow of their message in a volume the aim of which is to indicate the tendencies of modern fiction.

LEONARD PARSONS LIMITED



ND
468
R87
1922
C.1
ROBA

Art.BC
R

175950

artists.

NAME OF BORROWER.

Handwritten signature

nes god.

